

**"Volcano"**

An original screenplay by

Jerome D. Armstrong

Storm Front Productions

Civilization exists by geological consent,  
subject to change without notice.

- Will Durant

"Volcano"

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Raw, sun-scorched California desert.  
A vast tortuous, semibarren land. Five hundred million  
years of thrusting, folding, erosion.

Mojave Desert  
7:02 AM

The 120-degree air is thick and still.  
Silence hovers eerily.

CLOSE ON:

two PRAIRIE DOGS. Rubbing noses. Nipping at each other.  
Rolling in the powder of a dry creek bed.

The female bites the male on the neck. Flips him over onto  
his back. She jumps aside and chatters as the male scampers  
to his feet to shake the dust off.

These two are obviously an item.

He gathers his strength. She growls. He circles, ready to  
mount. She displays a full mouth of sharp snarling teeth.

THEN.....

Something spooks them.  
They perch on their hind legs as though a predator were  
stalking to kill.

THEN....

The earth begins to shake.

The prairie dogs freeze on their haunches.

The earth growls and rumbles. Shock waves explode across  
the desert floor. Cactus sway back and forth like  
inflatable toys.

The Mojave is taking a pounding at magnitude 7.4.

The earth opens, torn asunder by godlike forces, swallowing  
sand like a ravenous beast.

Distant Mesozoic hills vomit clouds of dust.

Then.....

The shaking stops. The desert is still once more.

And our two furry lovers?

They are now twenty feet apart, separated by a haunting, dark, bottomless crevasse.

And we CUT TO:

AN AERIAL VIEW OF LOS ANGELES - DAY

We're moving south over the Santa Monica mountains to see the Greater Los Angeles Basin.

RADIO DEEJAY (V.O.)

Rise and shine! Shake and bake! God's alarm clock says... it's time to wake up!

(then)

You know what scares me the most about living in L.A.? I'm reminded of the astronaut who came back to earth from a lunar mission. In his debriefing, the psychologist asked him what his last thought was before liftoff. The astronaut said, "What kept running through my mind was that every part in this shuttle was supplied by the lowest bidder."

A SERIES OF SHOTS

accompany the deejay's voice. A cacophonous symphony of city images:

Morning joggers on the beach. Gridlock on the 405. Sprawling neighborhoods. Homeless in Palisades Park. Babies in strollers. A beauty salon. Mansions along Sunset. Trucks. Buses. Exhaust. Faces, all ages, all races--painted with curiosity, apathy, anxiety, uncertainty, anticipation.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

You Southland folks are ringing the phones off the hook and I'm going take your calls. But before I do, I'm going to go to the woman who always brings us comfort in times like these--Dr. Amy Barnes out at Caltech. Dr. Barnes?... Dr. Barnes?

DR. BARNES (V.O.)

Yes.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

What can you tell us about what seemed to be one hell of a big aftershock?

DR. BARNES (V.O.)

It's a little early to say exactly, but based on the preliminary data I've seen, it doesn't look like an aftershock.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

So what... we got an original here... doc?

DR. BARNES (V.O.)

Yes. The epicenter was 80 miles out in the desert... on a fault we didn't know about.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

So what appears to be minimal damage for us here is because L.A. is so far away from the epicenter?

DR. BARNES (V.O.)

I think so... yes.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

On a fault we didn't know about? Isn't that frightening?

DR. BARNES (V.O.)

(pause)

Yes... it is.

And all the time we're seeing and feeling the city: The lousy traffic. The heat. The chaos. The excitement. The children. Cops. What would plunge dwellers in any other city into unmanageable trauma and social despair is just another day for Los Angeles folks.

Life goes on.

EXT. CALTECH - DAY

Establish.

INT. CALTECH - DAY

Meet Dr. Amy Barnes. She's 38 and seated behind a desk that's a trash heap of seismology charts. Her hair is as

disheveled as her desk. Kate Mayron, 33, her assistant, enters, hands her a cup of brew.

KATE  
You are soooo bad...

DR. BARNES  
I hate that guy. He is mucho creepy.

KATE  
(playfully)  
Telling him it's frightening... we're gonna get a zillion calls, you know.

DR. BARNES  
I'm sick and tired of being the one who has to tell everybody that there's nothing to worry about... "It wasn't the Big One."

KATE  
If they only knew... every time we have a quake you're hoping for a big one.

DR. BARNES  
I still can't believe I missed the 7.2. Of all days to be out of town.

KATE  
Don't talk that way. You scare me.

DR. BARNES  
C'mon, Kate, you might slip in the bathtub, but you're not gonna die in a quake.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

City Hall, downtown LA. Establish.

ANGLE ON

One maintenance man to another:

FIRST GUY  
Shit, I thought New York was bad, but after bein' here for ten years, this place takes the fat fuggin' cake. Know what I'm tellin' ya? We got quakes. We got fires. We got riots, floods, houses slippin' around in the mud f'chrissakes.

SECOND GUY

Tell me about it...

FIRST GUY

I mean... c'mon, already... what the hell else could happen?

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

The lettering on an office door reveals:

Office of Emergency Operations

INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

It's a big "war room." Maps of the city and county cover the walls. Lots of electronics. A staff of twelve is frenetically busy on headset phones. What Houston Control is to NASA, this place is to L.A. after an earthquake.

STAFFER 1

Power out in Hollywood hills! Grid 17.

STAFFER 2

Roger that on Grid 17.

STAFFER 3

Sherman Oaks... broken gas feeder line on Ventura.

STAFFER 2

Tell Hollywood--DWP's running a 487.

In the corner of the room is a modest desk. Behind the desk is a man. The man is Mike Roark. He's late thirties to mid forties. His small town demeanor feels refreshingly out of place in Los Angeles. Right now he's pacing back and forth, super hyped.

ROARK

Phil... I need the engineer's report on the 105 overpass.

PHIL

Roger that.

STAFFER 4

We got a live feed on the UCLA damage. Monitor 7.

Roark moves to a bank of ten video monitors. We focus on monitor 7--

MONITOR - Live video shot of damage to the UCLA library.

ROARK

Any structural?

STAFFER 4

Not on superficial. The university  
squawked so I left it open?

ROARK

No. Absolutely not! I don't care who  
squawked... red tag it until we can get  
inside the wall for a look at the  
steel.

Roark moves to his assistant, Janet. She's 45. Her desk is  
populated with plants, cat toys, and a picture of her three-  
legged alley cat, Augie. She's reading a fax as the machine  
spits it out.

ROARK

We got a reading yet?

JANET

U.S.G.S. in Colorado's calling it a  
7.4.

ROARK

(across the room)

7.4 everyone. One confirm.

He peels off his headset.

ROARK

Go ahead and call the governor's office  
with the 7.4 and step everyone down to  
a level 3.

JANET

Level 3 it is.

ROARK

When we get the damage estimate, I want  
to call the governor before we give it  
to the media.

He starts across the room. Janet wheels back in her chair...  
Augie's on her lap. Snoozing. She plops the cat on the  
desk and moves--

JANET

Mr. Roark...

ROARK

Yeah...



JANET  
Can I... get you anything?

ROARK  
No... thanks...

JANET  
Maybe a little decaf?...

He knows what she's getting at--

ROARK  
Is it that obvious?

JANET  
Does an anteater have a tongue?

A mild TEMBLOR ROLLS THROUGH the room. The lights overhead swing to and fro.

Roark stiffens. Quickly--

ROARK  
Stay calm, everybody!!!

After hearing low grade chuckles from the others, Mike realizes he overreacted. He moves into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

Roark sucks in a couple of deep breaths and gazes into the mirror--

ROARK  
Man oh man... what're you doing here?

Janet enters--

JANET  
Hi.

ROARK  
Hi.

JANET  
It's your first one, isn't it?

ROARK  
My first?... Ah... yeah... kinda.

JANET  
How do you like it?

ROARK

It's no big deal... I mean... I, ah...  
I'm... I'm lying. I'm not big on going  
to bed in a rambler and waking up in a  
split level.

JANET

It's not the same as managing a flood  
crisis, huh?

ROARK

No, ma'am. Back east... we knew it was  
coming. Every year--like clockwork.  
The rain comes down, the rivers go up.

(then)

I took this job... I took it because I  
thought it would give me more time...  
y'know... my kid and all.

JANET

I don't want to comment on your  
personal affairs, Mr. Roark, but nobody  
moves to L.A. for more time with their  
kids.

We CUT TO:

THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS

In the hills near the Hollywood Reservoir. The picture of  
tranquility. California poppies in bloom. Birds chirping.  
A lizard suns himself on a rock.

Then.... an ominous low grade rumble... a growling from  
hell... loose gravel rolls down the hillside. The birds  
stop chirping.

EXT. STREETS OF LOS ANGELES - DAY

Mike Roark driving the streets of L.A. in his sun-battered  
'79 Scout. He still has Ohio plates.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

We're on a street in a neighborhood near Fairfax and  
Olympic, moving in on a bird's-eye view of a small  
California bungalow. Mike Roark pulls into the driveway and  
stops.

CLOSE ON -- STEAM ERUPTING from a boiling teapot.

INT. ROARK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Roark house. A mud turtle crawls across the living room floor while a border collie tries to bite the turtle's head off.

Mike Roark enters. Pulls the teapot off the stove. Roark moves down the hallway to a bedroom. He is reluctant to knock. We can see by the look on his face that he's concerned. He taps on the door.

ROARK  
Reena... Reena...?

INT. REENA'S ROOM - DAY

Meet Reena--fourteen. A fourteen with extra pain. She's sitting on the bed, her arms wrapped around her knees--as though she were trying to hold her world together. Her melancholy state is punctuated by eyes that betray nights of difficult sleep.

ROARK (O.S.)  
Reena...?

She lies down and pulls the covers over her.

Roark opens the door.

ROARK  
Where were you last night?

No answer.

ROARK  
I think I deserve an answer to my question.

REENA  
I went to see a friend.

ROARK  
I see. When did you get in?

REENA  
I don't know.

ROARK  
Well... you weren't here when I left for work. I've been calling every fifteen minutes since the quake. So... let me guess... you just walked in a few minutes ago?

REENA

I guess.

ROARK

Reena. You can't just keep running off like this..

She perks ever so slightly--

REENA

If you're so concerned, why weren't you here? Where were you?

Roark sees the pain in her and knows it cuts much deeper than this episode--

ROARK

I had to work.

REENA

Yeah... right.

She rolls out of bed.

REENA

Something could have fallen on me and killed me.

ROARK

I didn't know when I left we were going to have an earthquake.

REENA

Yeah... sure.

ROARK

Reena, I have an obligation to the people of this city to see that they are safe, too. I couldn't walk out on my job.

Upset and confused, she splits.

EXT. ROARK HOUSE - DAY

Reena dashes out. Roark follows.

ROARK

Reena! Stop!

She doesn't. Walks fast.

ROARK

Get back in the house.

She keeps moving--

ROARK  
I'm warning you...

She stops and turns..

REENA  
You're warning me? Good... what're you  
going to do... send me to prison? It  
would be a relief.

ROARK  
Stop it.

She bursts into tears.

REENA  
Oh... God... I just want to go home.

She slams her fists into the side of her head.  
He grabs her wrists and holds her.  
She pulls away and runs.

INT. ROARK HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Roark enters. Dejected. He moves into his bedroom and sits  
on the bed. On his night stand--the picture of a woman--  
blonde, with a warm, inviting smile. Caring eyes.

He picks up the photo--

ROARK  
I don't know what to tell her.  
Sometimes I hate her.  
(then)  
Why aren't you here? Why aren't you  
here to help me?

EXT. MID WILSHIRE DISTRICT - DAY

A couple blocks east of La Brea and Wilshire.

A DWP utility crew has set up camp around an open manhole in  
the middle of Wilshire Blvd.

The job foreman, Chuck, is sitting in the cab of the truck  
filling out paperwork.

Sewer workers, Del and Jose, in grubby overalls and hard hats--

DEL

Every time we have a quake, the old lady throws a fit. Every friggin' time. Hell... she screams at me like I cause the damn things.

JOSE

Tell me 'bout it, mane. Rosa, she starts cookin'.

DEL

Hey...At least she ain't freakin'.

JOSE

No.. I think she's freakin', mane. Che made forty-five tamales before I left for work.

Carlos, a fellow worker, struggles to climb out of the hole, sweat flowing from every pore in his body, gasping for breath.

DEL

Christ.

JOSE

Carlos. Whatsamatter, mane?

The worker falls to the pavement, his lungs heaving.

JOSE

Carlos!

DEL

Chuck! Chuck!

Chuck comes running.

CHUCK

Jeezus. What happened?

Carlos can't talk... points down into the hole.

DEL

Gimme a hand!

Del and Jose tug on the safety line that reaches down into the sewer. Jose yells down to other workers in the hole--

JOSE

Hang on! Hang on!

They pull. And pull.

ON CHUCK

as he darts to the cab and grabs the mike off the seat.

CHUCK

This is 157... we need help... get me a rescue team and a whole shitload of ambulances. I got nine people in the hole and somethin's wrong!

ON DEL AND JOSE

They hoist a man out of the hole... onto the street, his body convulsing in violent spasms. The side of his face is raw, boiled meat. Parts of his clothing are seared to his body. A flashlight is welded to the skin on his hand.

JOSE

Oh Dios mio!

DEL

Oh, man... oh, Jeezus.

Cut to:

CLOSE ON a woman singing. Her name is **Misty**. She's 29 with silken skin and long full hair that cascades over delicate shoulders. Her brown eyes sparkle as her full Natalie Merchant voice chants--

MISTY

Don't let it be said,  
I was untrue,  
I never found a home,  
Inside of you,  
Don't let it be said,  
I was untrue,  
I gave you all my time...

DEREK (O.S.)

Hold it, Misty...

She stops singing. We pull back--we're--

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

Misty is standing behind a mike. **Derek**, 30s, dark hair and boyishly handsome, emerges from the control booth--

DEREK

Let's take that again. Okay?

MISTY

Did I do something wrong?

He moves to her and smiles.

DEREK

No. You were perfect. I just want to set a different level.

MISTY

I never knew this was so complicated.

Derek laughs.

DEREK

You think this is complicated, you should see this place when we get a nine rockers in here--fully equipped with obnoxious egos.

(then)

Besides, you better get used to it. This demo's gonna knock 'em off their chairs.

As he returns to the booth--

DEREK

From the chorus.

A lone hand clap resounds from the darkness. Misty squints to see who this intruder might be. He steps forward. It's Carl, 30ish with the body of a guy who spends five nights a week at the gym.

MISTY

What are you doing here Carl?

Derek steps out of the booth.

CARL

Who's he?

MISTY

This is Derek.

Carl faces off with Derek.

CARL

Take a break.

DEREK

What's your problem?

CARL

Me? I don't have a problem. You do.



MISTY  
Why'd you come here, Carl?

CARL  
To see you. Maybe get a bite.

MISTY  
Why didn't you call me first?

CARL  
Hey... I can't even see my own woman?

MISTY  
I'm not your woman.

CARL  
The other night you sure were.

MISTY  
That doesn't mean you have the right to  
barge in here and interrupt my work.

Derek steps in.

DEREK  
Maybe you should go, Carl.

CARL  
Why don't you go write a song, pal.

Carl shoves Derek. Hard. Derek falls against the wall.

MISTY  
Stop it! STOP IT!!!  
(then)  
I'll go with you.

DEREK  
She's not going.

MISTY  
No... it's okay, Derek. I'll be fine.

DEREK  
You don't have to do this.

MISTY  
It's okay. Really.

Carl hands Misty her coat. It's clear that with all her determination and talent, she doesn't have the fortitude to pry herself away from this man.

EXT. CEDARS SINAI MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

Establish.

INT. CEDARS SINAI MEDICAL CENTER - BURN TREATMENT - DAY

The usual flurry of activity.

INT. BURN EMERGENCY TREATMENT ROOM - DAY

Dr. Norma Caldwell is working feverishly on the DWP worker pulled out of the Wilshire sewer. He's suspended in a sling over a stainless steel tub of antibiotic solution. Dr. Caldwell and an assistant are laying pieces of medicated gauze on his mutilated body.

Roark watches from a distance.

DR. CALDWELL

Press... ointment... gauze here...  
gauze here... press... and here...

(then)

Blood pressure?...

ASSISTANT

170 over 105.

DR. CALDWELL

Start a Procardia drip.

Roark moves in--

ROARK

Dr. Caldwell?

DR. CALDWELL

Who are you?

ROARK

Mike Roark. I head up the....

DR. CALDWELL

Nevermind. I know who you are.

ROARK

Oh. Okay. How is he doing?

DR. CALDWELL

Fifty percent... second degree burns.

Ten percent, first degree.

(then)

What the hell caused this?

ROARK

I don't know.

DR. CALDWELL  
 You got 8 people dead and one almost  
 dead and you don't know?

A beat.

ROARK  
 Is there anything unusual about the  
 burns?

DR. CALDWELL  
 (snapping)  
 Like what?

Roark tries a different approach--

ROARK  
 We had a nasty black bear used to mosey  
 around on the farm where I grew up. My  
 grandad used to tell me he would be my  
 friend... my true friend... if only I  
 didn't frazzle 'im.

DR. CALDWELL  
 Okay. Grrrr. I'm sorry. It's just  
 that I get pissed-off every time I have  
 to treat someone who's badly burned  
 because of the city's inability to  
 institute proper safety procedures.  
 Last week it was a fire in an  
 electrical substation... the week  
 before that it was something else...

She peels a flap of infected skin away from the body and  
 holds it under Roark's nose. He reels.

DR. CALDWELL  
 Sulfur.

ROARK  
 Why sulfur?

DR. CALDWELL  
 Look, Roark, you got a hell of a lotta  
 heat in a sewer for some reason. Toss  
 in a few sulfa chemicals... I don't  
 know. Maybe illegal dumping? Wouldn't  
 be the first time.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

Santa Monica Bay. The water is glass, waves are slow  
 rollers. Surfers dot the coastline like sleeping sea lions.

We move in on a SURFER. Within yards of him the ocean begins to bubble frantically. Like boiling water on a stove.

He paddles for shore--real fast.

EXT. MID WILSHIRE DISTRICT - DAY

Wilshire. The area where the city sewer workers died is cordoned off. No pedestrians. No traffic.

A mild TEMBLOR shakes.....

CLOSE ON --

An expansion joint in the street. The concrete slabs separate, leaving a gap of over an inch.

NEARBY --

The local religious zealot, Bobby Shine, holds a placard that reads:

"A holy fire shall consume them"

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

Mayor Howard Essicker, flocked by aides, is strutting through City Hall. Trailing the entourage is Dr. Amy Barnes. Everybody wants a piece of the mayor's time. He loves the action. He loves to be needed. He needs to be needed.

AIDE

Mayor?

ESSICKER

Larry, you know I can't do this now.

(to another aide)

Get me everything you can on the drive-by shooting in Bel Air. I want everything. And tell the chief that I'd like to see him in my office when he has the stats on the Benson thing.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

ESSICKER

(to another)

Are we set for the city council?

AIDE  
We'll knock 'em dead, mayor.

Essicker comes to a halt when he sees Roark approaching from the other direction.

ESSICKER  
Mike!

ROARK  
Mayor... Miss Barnes.

DR. BARNES  
"Dr." Barnes.

ROARK  
Sorry.

ESSICKER  
I was briefed on the accident.  
Terrible thing. God awful. We don't  
want that to happen again.

ROARK  
I think we have a problem here.

ESSICKER  
Mike. We don't have a problem.

ROARK  
We should evacuate the area.

ESSICKER  
Evacuate?

ROARK  
Yeah.

DR. BARNES  
We should warn the residents of what  
may be atypical seismological  
instability.

Everybody gives her a look. Essicker stops.

ESSICKER  
Mike... we have a bunch of broken pipes  
or something. F'chissakes, we just had  
an earthquake. Something broke. It  
happens.

ROARK  
There are eight people dead, Howard!

ESSICKER  
 You don't think I know that? You don't  
 think I feel for the families of those  
 people?

A beat.

ROARK  
 I called someone else to come in on  
 this.

ESSICKER  
 Someone...? What do you mean someone  
 else?

ROARK  
 A geologist type. Expert in what they  
 call... ground heat. Harrington  
 recommended him.

DR. BARNES  
 I think Caltech can handle this.

Essicker pulls Roark aside.

ESSICKER  
 Lookit, Mike. You were hired to  
 facilitate the everyday operation of  
 this city in the event of an  
 earthquake. All those flat-ass egghead  
 experts don't know jack shit.  
 (then)  
 Something is busted. Fix it.  
 (then)  
 Oh... and Mike... let's keep the press  
 in the dark.

CUT TO:

A helicopter shot of Wilshire. As we survey the situation,  
 we hear:

WURTZ (V.O.)  
 This is Diane Wurtz coming to you live  
 from the mid-Wilshire district where a  
 mysterious phenomenon that resulted in  
 the deaths of eight city workers is  
 drawing diverse speculation and City  
 Hall isn't talking...

Now... down on street level.

WURTZ (V.O.)  
 Shit... shit... damn...

And we PAN TO--

Diane Wurtz, a tall woman with angular features, as she barks at her cameraman--

WURTZ

How did I end up with you? I make a simple request for a close up. It was a simple request, wasn't it? But maybe what I consider simple is in fact much more complicated to the 3rd grade mind...

She fixes her hair.

WURTZ

Can you point the camera at me?

CAMERAMAN

Yes.

WURTZ

Good. Let's go again. Count me down.

EXT. STREET -- ROARK DRIVING - DAY

On his cell phone--

JANET (FILTERED)

How's the overpass?

ROARK

City engineer says it'll be there a hundred years from now. I'm on my way in.

JANET (FILTERED)

Better swing by the Tar Pits. We got something weird going on over there and Stan Olberg isn't sure how he should handle it.

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - DAY

Folks have gathered around the biggest tar pit, the Lake Pit, amazed that what was once a pool of dark oily water is now bubbling violently. A mist of gases escapes from the surface.

Close on -- hot, bubbling tar.'

EXT. STREET NEAR TAR PITS - DAY

Roark wheels his Scout into the back entrance.  
Jumps out and is greeted by the Office of Emergency  
Operations district supervisor, Stan Olberg, a man with the  
weathered face of a cowboy.

ROARK  
What'd'we got here, Stan?

OLBERG  
I dunno for sure, Mike. Here's the  
head archaeologist... if you wanna talk  
to him.

As he hands Roark a piece of paper, his hand shakes.

ROARK  
You okay, Stan?

OLBERG  
Yeah, Mike. Solid as a rock.  
Everything's good. The job's good.  
The people's good.

ROARK  
Okay... let's take a look at what we  
got here.

As they walk to the Lake Pit--

STAN  
I haven't had a drink in weeks, Mike.

Roark doesn't comment. Just observes the bubbling tar--

ROARK  
This ever happened before?

OLBERG  
Not in the last million years.  
Least that's what the pointy-head fella  
told me.  
(then)  
Gives me the willies.

Roark glances around the pit to see people with their  
children.

ROARK  
Who's in charge?

OLBERG  
That young fella.



Roark moves in on a bulky 25 year old in an ill-fitting blazer.

ROARK

Get everyone out of here. Now. Close the place down. Stan'll get you whatever support you need.

MANAGER

There's a lot of people here... I can't just kick 'em all out. I gotta check it out with my boss.

ROARK

Check this out.

Flashes I.D.

ROARK

If you don't have this park empty in ten minutes, the only job you'll be able to get in this city is shovelling shit in the dog pound.

ON THE TAR PIT

The concrete mastodons, shrouded in a mist of white steam, look as though they're coming to life.

ANGLE ON

Margo. She's wrapping herself in a blanket as she tosses bits of bread to a sparrow. She's 55 and her face tells us they have not been easy years. A park employee approaches--

EMPLOYEE

Ma'am... excuse me, ma'am...

She pays no mind.

EMPLOYEE

I'm gonna have to ask you to go home.

MARGO

You're new here, aren't you?

EMPLOYEE

Yes... why?

She points to her belongings under the boughs of a pine tree.

MARGO

This is my home.

ANGLE ON THE MAIN ACCESS TO THE PARK

As patrons are herded out, they snap last-minute pictures of the boiling tar pit.

"

BACK TO ROARK

On the move. He looks across the tar pit to see some guy with a long pole dipping a ladle into the tar. Roark strides over.

The guy is about 30. Dark hair in a greased crew cut, goatee, earring, plaid shirt with the sleeves ripped off and black steel-toed shit kickers. He could care less that everyone is leaving. His name is Dino Skinner.

ROARK

The park is closing.

SKINNER

I know.

ROARK

Gotta move out, pal.

SKINNER

Why don't you go jack up somebody else?

ROARK

It's not safe here.

SKINNER

No shit.

ROARK

Look... I can have you arrested.

SKINNER

Go ahead. Arrest my ass... but before you do, call Mike Roark. He's with the...

ROARK

I'm Roark. I'm Roark.

(then...ah-hah!)

You must be... ah... Skinner?

SKINNER

Yup.

ROARK

Dino Skinner.

Skinner extends a hand.

SKINNER

Yup.

ROARK

I didn't expect someone so...

SKINNER

(overlapping)

So cool? Right. You expected some  
dipwad dressed like Jungle Jim.

ROARK

Something like that. But...anyway...  
sorry. I mean if Harrington says  
you're the man, I don't care what you  
look like.

SKINNER

Oh, really?

ROARK

Well... you are young.

SKINNER

What can I say? I was born late.

ROARK

Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... I  
need help here and I need it fast.

Skinner pulls in the ladle and dumps the contents into a  
stainless steel container.

SKINNER

You got a lot of gas in this soup.

Roark follows Skinner. Skinner walks with a limp.

They approach a converted Greyhound bus. It's black with  
lots of esoteric gizmos and heavy black tint windows. Looks  
like Jules Verne designed it for Darth Vader.

ROARK

Some rig.

SKINNER

It's not a rig. It's a her. And her  
name is Vesuvius.

INT. SKINNER'S BUS - DAY

We see the interior of the bus through Roark's eyes and what an eyeful it is. A color cornucopia of hi-tech equipment--everything from test tubes to spectrometers.

ROARK

Dare I ask what any of this stuff is?

SKINNER

Depends on whether you want a science lesson or you want to know what's going on underneath Los Angeles.

ROARK

Skip the science lesson.

SKINNER

Good. Cop a squat.

Roark sits. Skinner speeds around on a stool on wheels. Extracts a dab of the tar sample and places it in a glass tube that he drops into a device that looks like a centrifuge--only it's not. He flips on a couple of computer monitoring devices.

SKINNER

Lucky you caught me. I was packing for Borneo.

Skinner opens a jar of instant coffee, scoops out a heaping spoonful and dumps it in his mouth. Chases it with a glass of water.

SKINNER

Coffee?

ROARK

No thanks.

Skinner moves to a very sophisticated piece of equipment.

ROARK

What are we doing?

SKINNER

A gas analysis.

ROARK

What do you mean... event?

SKINNER

Ask me when I'm done.

ROARK  
How long will that be?

SKINNER  
A few more hours.

ROARK  
Fine. You can park next to my office.  
I want you near me.

SKINNER  
I need Caltech to download all their  
quake data over the past five years. I  
want all their "S" wave patterns and  
"P" wave patterns. I need hypocenter  
and epicenter data.

ROARK  
That's a tall order.

SKINNER  
Hey. I usually measure ground surface  
deformation and take electrical,  
magnetic and gravity measurements.

ROARK  
Tell me something.

SKINNER  
Yo.

ROARK  
Why should I trust you?

SKINNER  
You called me, dad.

Roark is concerned about what he's getting himself into.

ROARK  
Okay... okay... I need to know. What  
the hell is going on here?

SKINNER  
Ask God.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Hollywood. Misty and Carl walking. Misty stops at the door  
to her apartment building.

MISTY  
Goodnight, Carl.

CARL  
Whatdaya mean, goodnight? I'm coming  
up.

MISTY  
No, Carl. I don't think it's a good  
idea.

CARL  
What is this?

MISTY  
I'm very tired. I have to work all day  
tomorrow. I want to go to sleep.

CARL  
This is bullshit.

MISTY  
Can't you ever just listen to me, Carl?

CARL  
I'm listening. I just don't like what  
I'm hearing. It's that guy you were  
with, right?

MISTY  
Goodnight, Carl.

CARL  
I know it's him.

She unlocks her door.

MISTY  
I'll call you tomorrow.

CARL  
You talk to me now because I say so.

She closes the door and locks it. He slams the door with  
his fist.

CARL  
You're gonna be sorry.

EXT. CITY HALL - NIGHT

Vesuvius is parked next to the building.

INT. SKINNER'S MOBILE LAB - VESUVIUS - NIGHT

Roark listens to Skinner.

SKINNER

Okay... here's the poop. The tar pits--  
-a lot of CO2. Helium levels at 50  
parts per million. Some sulfur. Some  
traces of fluorine, and--lucky for us--  
a teeny weeny dab of chlorine.

ROARK

Why lucky for us?

SKINNER

We'd be choking up gobs of blood by  
now.

ROARK

Great... what's the bad news?

SKINNER

I'll tell ya, dad. We got some nasty  
telltale gases here and a helluva lot  
of heat. You got dead sewer workers  
with sulfur burns. My guess is this  
quake opened the door to mother nature.

ROARK

What does that mean?

SKINNER

It means, you better start getting  
people ready to evacuate. Now. Else  
yer gonna be calling India for body  
bags.

EXT. MID WILSHIRE DISTRICT - NIGHT

Remember that one-inch separation between the concrete slabs  
in the street? As we watch, it's growing... an  
inconceivable power of nature is pulling the concrete slabs  
apart... tons of earth... grinding... the crack widens to  
four inches.

INT. MAYOR ESSICKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Essicker is seated behind his desk. Roark and Amy  
Barnes are seated. Skinner is pacing. Essicker's usual  
smooth political manner has gone sour.

ESSICKER

Alright... alright... What's the best  
case scenario?

SKINNER

The magma never surfaces. The pressure subsides and it drops to a safe level in the earth's crust. No problema.

ESSICKER

What's the worst case?

SKINNER

Los Angeles gets replaced by a volcanic mountain.

Barnes feels threatened by Skinner--

DR. BARNES

I think that prognostication is a tad extremist.

ESSICKER

(to Skinner)

I'm sitting here listening to you and saying to myself: this is utterly preposterous.

Essicker and Skinner share a moment of mutual hatred.

ESSICKER

So.... what do you recommend?

DR. BARNES

I... ah... believe we need more data...

ROARK

Evacuate the city.

ESSICKER

Evacuate the city. Of course. Why didn't I think of that? Send 2 million people out into the desert with pup tents and porta-potties.

SKINNER

Would you rather see 2 million people cremated?

ROARK

I say evacuate.

DR. BARNES

I say let us do more research.

ESSICKER

Listen to me. You people have nothing to go on. You're alarmists. What proof do you have?



ESSICKER (CONT)

Do you have any idea what an alarmist scare would do to this city? My God, it would be economic ruin.

SKINNER

Doesn't it bother you that you're about to become the world's largest hors d'oeuvre.

Roark steps in--

ROARK

Howard, listen...

Essicker rises. Meeting's over. That's it. As they file out--

ESSICKER

(to Roark)

I'm ordering you to stay away from the sewer accident scene. Let DWP handle it.

(of Skinner)

Oh... by the way... I never want to see him again. Understood?

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Roark and Skinner exit.

ROARK

And... are all volcanologists so low on social skills?

SKINNER

The guy's a dough head.

ROARK

And what about "Dr." Barnes?

SKINNER

Just a little healthy professional rivalry.

They walk on--

ROARK

Well... now what?

SKINNER

I gotta get down in that storm sewer.

ROARK

Fat chance.

EXT. THE TAR PITS

The oil is a fountain of black plumes.  
An ambient growling noise--as if the guts of the earth were tearing open.

INT. ROARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Living room. Roark is planted in a chair. Feels the frustration of his conflict with Essicker. Door bell. Roark yanks the door open. It's Skinner.

SKINNER

Wassup?

Skinner sees the angst.

SKINNER

Got any suds?

ROARK

"Lite" suds.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - NIGHT

Headlights along a lone desert road. The full moon lights a cloud of dust that billows as the vehicle comes to a halt. Two dark figures emerge behind flashlight beams. They come closer--it's Dr. Amy Barnes and her assistant, Kate.

DR. BARNES

He thought that because his IQ was over 150 that I couldn't resist going out with him.

KATE

Please... the higher the IQ, the greater the probability they can't do anything for themselves and you end up taking care of them.

DR. BARNES

You got that right.

They carve a trail through the cactus until they come upon the crevasse that separated the prairie dogs.

KATE

Wow.

DR. BARNES  
Satellite photos don't do it justice.

KATE  
I'll say.

DR. BARNES  
Skinner is on a wild goose chase. This is where he should be looking. Not in the city.

Kate shimmies to the edge. Peeks over. Picks up a rock and tosses it in. Follows it with her light into the darkness. There is no bottom.

The sand gives way and she slides toward the abyss. Amy grabs her by the shirt and pulls her back.

DR. BARNES  
Careful. I don't want to lose you.

#### BACK TO THE ROARK HOUSE

The camera pans up the exterior of the house to a small roof deck where Roark, Skinner and six empty beer bottles are looking out over the sparkling lights of the city.

SKINNER  
One of my favorites was Krakatau. In Aubillyt... 1883... there was an existing volcano on the island, right? It went into continual gigundous explosive eruptions. Columns of pumice and ash were blasted as high as 5 miles in the air. Pyroclastic flows swept over the island and across the sea bed causing tidal waves 150 feet high. All in all, 165 costal villages were wiped out and 36,000 people were killed. Dust in the atmosphere lowered temperatures around the world for 6 years...  
(then)  
Critical, hey?

ROARK  
Totally.

SKINNER

I was on the team that predicted Mt. St. Helen's. Thanks to early detection only 57 people died. Could have been a lot more. It was 20,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb.

(then)

But we couldn't save the animals. Lost 6000 deer, 5200 elk, 11 million fish, 27,000 grouse, 1100 rabbits, 1400 coyote, 300 bobcats, 200 bears, and 15 mountain lions.

(then)

Then there was the Philippines... Mt. Pintatubo...

ROARK

Hold it, Skinner... Skinner?... There's got to be something we can do.

Skinner cracks open a beer.

SKINNER

Other cultures used to sacrifice a virgin.

ROARK

Good luck. We'd never find one in L.A.

The men share a chuckle. Just then Reena enters--

ROARK

Hi, honey. Ah... this is my daughter... Reena. This is Dino... Dino Skinner.

REENA

Hi.

She's despondent.

REENA

When can we talk?

She can see that he'd rather not.

ROARK

I... ah... maybe...

REENA

No... that's okay. Later.

ROARK

How 'bout tomorrow?

He--and we--can see that it's not okay.

ROARK  
First thing in the morning?

REENA  
Yeah... sure.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - NIGHT

Dr. Barnes and Kate have set up camp near the crevasse. The light glows from the newest addition to their research camp--a vintage twenty-five-foot Airstream.

CLOSE ON THE CREVASSE

The moment fills with portent as a whisper of vapors rises from the crevasse and ascends into the night sky.

And we CUT TO:

A DREAM:

A muddy river races madly through an oak forest. It's early spring in Ohio. No buds yet. Just lifeless branches.

A pick-up truck speeds along the dirt road that tracks the river just above the flood line.

The man driving the truck is Mike Roark. His eyes are frantically scanning the river. He drives. And drives. And looks. And drives--his face distorted with fear.

Ahead he sees something. He stops. It's Reena. Two years younger than now. Standing like a frightened deer. Soaking wet.

Roark jumps out of the truck. In the middle of the river, his wife, Bonnie, is caught in a web of tangled branches.

BONNIE  
Mike!

ROARK  
I see you, sweetheart.

BONNIE  
Mike... help me!

The force of the water has her hopelessly pinned. She's swallowing river water every time she opens her mouth.

Roark turns to Reena with wild rage stabbing from his eyes--

ROARK  
How did this happen?

Reena's face is filled with fear and confusion.

REENA  
She saved me...

Roark knows he can't swim to Bonnie. The current would whisk him away like a leaf.

ROARK  
Can you move?

BONNIE  
Help me!

She can't move.

ROARK  
Bonnie... listen to me! You have to free yourself!

She struggles, gulps more water.

BONNIE  
I can't.

ROARK  
Try... try... TRY! DAMMIT,  
BONNIE...TRY!!!

She does. But the water's rising. Making it harder. And Roark looks up river to see a massive log heading straight for his wife.

ROARK  
Bonnie!... Bonnie!...

Bonnie looks up. Sees the log coming like a five-ton missile. There's nothing she can do. And for the last few seconds a feeling of acceptance fills her soul.

And we flash to--present time:

It's night now. Roark is writhing in bed like a baby. Covers on the floor. Pillow soaked with tears.

ROARK  
Noooo!!!

FADE TO BLACK. FADE IN ON:

The next morning--

A robin in a tug of war with a worm who refuses to surrender.

INT. ROARK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Roark awakens, reaches for the phone and dials.

ROARK

Meet me at the sewer site in 20 minutes. Bring your gear.

INT. ROARK HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Reena emerges from her room and walks into the kitchen.

REENA

Daddy... ?

She moves to the back door--

REENA

Daddy... ?

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - DAY

Misty strides down the sidewalk to the entrance of the subway. She carries her workout bag over her shoulder, her hair still wet from the shower.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

Misty descends the steps. Her eyes search the platform and find Derek's. She bounds to him and gives him a big hug.

DEREK

Ready for endless hours of mixing?

MISTY

As long as it's with you.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOVING - DAY

Misty and Derek.

DEREK

Tell me something...

MISTY

Hmmm...

DEREK

What's with this Carl jerk?

Feeling as though she has to cover for Carl--

MISTY

Oh... Carl... he's not as bad as he seems."

DEREK

How can you say that? He treats you like shit.

MISTY

When I first came out here, I didn't know anyone. I slept in my car. I was parked down by the beach one night when a couple of men came. They took... they took everything I had. God knows what they would have done if Carl hadn't come along. He helped me. He really helped me.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - DAY

The sewer site. Cordoned off. Mike Roark watches as Skinner--in welding gloves--pulls a steel cable out of the manhole.

SKINNER

I like it that you're bucking authority here. You may have potential after all, dad.

ROARK

Don't call me dad. I'm not old enough to be your dad.

Skinner pulls the cable. The cable is getting awfully hot to handle. Skinner gives it a big tug and yanks a metal thermometer out of the hole. It falls to the ground. He bends down to read it--

SKINNER

Mama mambo Maria.

ROARK

What?

SKINNER

It's 900 degrees in there.

ROARK

Gas line?



SKINNER

No.

ROARK

You're sure?

SKINNER

It's not gas.

The street begins to rumble. Not the shaking of a temblor, just a rumble.

Then.....

BOOM!

The manhole cover down the street blows off like a cannon shot.

Roark and Skinner eat pavement.

BOOM!.....The next manhole cover blows and rockets skyward.

BOOM!!!.....the next...

...and.....BOOM.....BOOM.....BOOM.....the next three manhole covers in succession--right down Wilshire Blvd.

Skinner turns to Roark who's sweating baseballs.

SKINNER

That's no gas leak.

ROARK

No shit.

Just when we're starting to think some wacko terrorist is at work...

.....each open hole becomes a roaring thirty-foot geyser of white steam. The sound of a thousand railroad trains.

Roark yells to Skinner but we can't hear a word he's saying. Roark crawls to his feet and looks down Wilshire Blvd. at 6 Old Faithfuls.

HOLD on the geysers.

Then...

without warning.....the geysers stop. Dead. Sucked back into the earth. And all is quiet.

SKINNER

Do you know what we just saw?

ROARK

No.

SKINNER

Neither do I.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Dr. Amy Barnes' white Pathfinder is cruising through the desert, churning clouds of red dust.

EXT. CAMPSITE NEAR CREVASSE - DAY

Kate exits the Airstream and scans the reading off a seismograph. The needle begins to bounce. Wider and wider.

A primitive fear grips Kate.  
And the needle swings violently.  
Kate runs for the trailer, darts inside.

ANGLE

As Amy Barnes approaches, sees the trailer in the distance, the Pathfinder is increasingly difficult to control. She fights the wheel.

BACK TO THE TRAILER

As it rocks back and forth on creaking springs, Kate screams.

ANGLE

Amy Barnes is within a hundred yards of the trailer.

INT. THE TRAILER

Kate is tossed around like a puppet. She tries the door--it won't open. She is thrown against the window and it shatters.

KATE

Ahh!

She turns to see Amy approaching.

KATE

Amy!!!!

Amy stops the car and gets out. Fights to maintain her balance.

DR. BARNES

Kate!!!

Amy can't move, paralyzed by the earth movement. She falls to her knees.

THE TRAILER

Kate screams out the window. THEN.... the back end of the trailer sinks a couple of feet into the sand. Kate stops screaming. Then a couple of more feet of trailer are swallowed by hungry earth. She grabs onto the window to keep from sliding to the other end of the trailer. Blood flows as the broken glass cuts into her hand.

Amy Barnes watches in horror. Crawls toward the trailer on all fours.

A sinkhole pulls the other end of the trailer into the sand. And it sinks... and sinks... and sinks as an hysterical Kate tries to climb out the window.

DR. BARNES

Hurry!!! Hurry!!!

Kate gets halfway out the window, but the sand is now almost like liquid. Only two feet of the top of the trailer are visible. Kate's final scream is muffled as sand pours into her mouth. And the earth drinks her in.

Dr. Amy Barnes falls upon the sand and weeps.

INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

Roark is on the phone. Skinner is speaking into a tape recorder--

SKINNER

The entire event lasted about 20 to 25 seconds. There was a detectable sulfur odor. The residue deposited in the street showed a mineral and element profile similar to those in Yellowstone and Peru...

A T E M B L O R rolls through. Roark and Skinner look at each other.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - SAME TIME

You know where the street cracked earlier? The crack is widening as we watch. Five inches... six inches... seven inches. The concrete slabs buckle and heave.

PULL BACK TO SEE--

Near the County Museum. A six-block stretch of Wilshire is an agglomeration of every kind of emergency vehicle you can imagine. Curiosity seekers are held back by a phalanx of police.

Stream roars out of the crack.

Everyone panics and runs.

The concrete is busting up as though a giant hand were pushing up against it.

A rushing wind blows from the belly of the earth.

Then...

... the earth growls...

Then...

### \*\*\* LAVA BEGINS TO FLOW \*\*\*

Molten rock oozes from the crack. Incandescent orange, yellow, red. Creeps west on Wilshire.

The shaking stops.

The lava spreads to half the width of the street.

The first thing to get in its way is a DWP truck. The tires, engine block and gas tank explode in the 1,200 degree heat.

People stream out of the stores and offices like ants. They scurry to the north and south of Wilshire, fleeing from the hellish monster that has been unleashed.

Gravity pulls the lava down Wilshire. It overtakes a Mercedes 500 abandoned in the middle of the road. New Michelins blow like stun grenades. The cooling system explodes, popping the hood off the car.

### INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

What was once a peaceful atmosphere is now an ant farm on acid. Thirty people. Live video feeds of the Wilshire flow. Phones. Digital charts, charts and more charts.

Roark is sprinting across the room with Skinner right behind.

ROARK  
(to Janet)  
Link me with all the division chiefs...  
and I want the gas company here within  
the hour..

Roark stabs at the elevator button.

JANET  
What about the governor?

As the elevator doors close.

ROARK  
I already called him.

EXT. A STREET - SOUTH OF WILSHIRE - DAY

A tributary of lava--moving at about 100 feet per minute moves into the side of a quaint little Cape Cod house. The bushes ignite. The lava chews through the side of the house. As its screaming occupants run out the front door, the house explodes. The roof blows off.

EXT. CITY HALL - ROOF - DAY

Roark and Skinner exit onto the roof where Roark's O.E.O. chopper is ready for take-off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Two blocks north of Wilshire. A salesman in a Lincoln Town car is heading south toward Wilshire in a big hurry to get someplace, preoccupied with a ham sandwich. He sees the Wilshire light change to yellow and he speeds ahead. By the time he gets to the intersection it's too late. A motorcycle cop dives out of the way to avoid the Town Car which enters the intersection and turns left.

The driver locks the brakes and slides to a stop as he sees the lava coming... 20 feet... he's too shocked to believe what he's seeing... 15 feet... he tries to start the car. No go. The lava comes... 10 feet... the man scrambles to the passenger seat and opens the door. Before he can make a clean exit, the lava blows the two tires on the driver's side, sending him to the pavement on his belly. Before he can get up, the lava engulfs his legs. He tries to drag himself on his elbows. It's not pretty. Even the motorcycle cop turns his head.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Amy Barnes shuffles toward her car, the loss of her friend more than she can bear. When she stops to retrieve the seismograph, her tears turn to terror----as she begins to sink into the sand. Amy scrambles wildly to escape the mire that is pulling her down. Her screams are ferocious as the ground trembles and cloud of dust billows before our eyes.

A gust of wind sweeps the dust away and we see Dr. Amy Barnes stranded on a small island of sand--no bigger than a mobile home. Just her and a Joshua tree. The island is surrounded by a deep, dark crevasse. She is petrified that any movement on her part may cause what little security she has to fall away.

CUT TO: A HELICOPTER SHOT OF THE CITY --

ROARK (O.S., FILTERED)  
I'm waiting for a response. I repeat,  
waiting for a response.

JANET (O.S., FILTERED)  
We have twelve fire units deployed.  
Twenty three paramedic units. The  
police are evacuating.

ROARK (O.S., FILTERED)  
Close Santa Monica airport and use it  
to stage the water choppers.

JANET (O.S., FILTERED)  
Roger that. You're breaking up. I'm  
switching to 4 point 5, level 3.

ROARK (O.S., FILTERED)  
Roger that.

INT. O.E.O. HELICOPTER - DAY

Roark and Skinner are in a chopper, moving west, across the city. Roark turns to Skinner--

SKINNER  
I need a satellite uplink with a  
national security code clearance.

JANET (O.S., FILTERED)  
A what?

SKINNER

I need the Department of Defense ScanSat IX satellite. It takes thermographic readings of the earth's surface and converts them to graphic images.

ROARK

Why didn't you say so?

(then)

Janet... patch me through to Col. Brack at Edwards.

ANGLE -- THE CHOPPER

Zooms in low. Skinner is the first to spot it--lava flowing from the earth like honey from a jar, stretching down four blocks of Wilshire Blvd.

SKINNER

Sweet holy homegrown tomato.

We watch as the lava divides and a tributary takes a left on Cloverdale, heads south, downhill into a neighborhood.

The lava creeps down an alley and across a back yard, forcefully surrounding a single-story house like the blob. The white shiplap siding catches fire and burns slowly until the lava fries the gas line and it explodes, sending bright orange chunks of earth splattering across the neighbor's yard.

Some of the occupants make it out.

One man runs out a door directly into the path of the lava. He falls. The lava creeps over him. His right side is baked before his friends can pull him out.

IN THE O.E.O HELICOPTER

Roark grabs the radio. Spins the frequency dial.

ROARK (ON RADIO)

This is Air Two to Emergency One. Air two to Emergency One.

JANET (FILTERED)

Emergency One, go ahead Air Two.

ROARK (ON RADIO)

I am over the site now. This is a FEMA Level 1 Alert. I repeat, FEMA Level 1 Alert! I see people here. I want them out! I want them out now!

JANET (O.S., FILTERED)

Roger that.

Another chopper ROARS overhead. Roark looks to see a News 7 Bell Ranger.

ROARK (ON RADIO)

I want all news choppers restricted to  
1000 feet.

JANET (O.S., FILTERED)

They're gonna scream.

ROARK (ON RADIO)

Let 'em scream.

(to pilot)

Set this thing down!

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD - DAY

The lava flow moves down Wilshire.

A fire plug topples. A geyser of water blows into the air and is vaporized as it falls on the lava.

EXT. THE SKY - MINUTES LATER

Choppers as thick as locusts on the Serengeti. Media. Police. Medical rescue. One of the police choppers is broadcasting over loud speakers:

POLICE CHOPPER

Clear the area. This is an emergency.

Your life is in immediate danger.

Clear the area. Your life is in  
immediate danger. Clear the area...

Meanwhile, foolish souls are crowding as close as they can to get a look.

ANGLE

Police have Wilshire cleared five blocks in the direction of the flow. Six fire trucks have taken a stand at Wilshire and Burnside.

Roark stands with the mayor who's nearly catatonic.

ESSICKER

Why the hell didn't you tell me this  
would happen? Why didn't you tell me?

He shakes Roark.



ESSICKER

You gotta help me, Roark.

Roark pries away. Leaves him in his misery.

ANGLE - HELICOPTER SHOT

The red river flows. Three smaller tributaries are moving through neighborhoods to the south, carving trails of fire.

ANGLE

Gigantic fire-fighting Sikorsky 928s--like giant locusts--drop hoppers of water on burning houses.

EXT. WILSHIRE - DAY

Roark is pacing--talking into his phone when Vesuvius, Skinner's mobile lab, pulls up to the intersection. Skinner gets out and is stopped by a cop. Roark sees this and yells.

ROARK

Let him through.

Skinner moves to Roark.

ROARK

What happens if we turn fire hoses on the lava?

SKINNER

It takes a lot more water than a fire hose to cool this baby!

ROARK

Can we channel it?

SKINNER

In Iceland we built earthen dams to control the flow.

ROARK

How about concrete barriers?

SKINNER

We can direct it. But it's not water, Roark, it's lava. It crusts, it hardens... it builds up.

ROARK

But we can direct it for now?

SKINNER

For now.

Roark yells to a Caltrans supervisor.

ROARK

Peterson!

EXT. CEDARS SINAI MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

The parking lot is cluttered with emergency vehicles.

INT. HOSPITAL - BURN EMERGENCY

A family of four comforts a suffering loved one.

DR. CALDWELL

has a phone cradled against her chin as she peels charred clothing off a woman with a tweezers.

CALDWELL

George! I want every wrap you've got  
and every last drop of morphine...  
serum, pumps, sublingual... you name  
it.

A man passes on a gurney, his legs burned off to the knees.  
Caldwell flags a nurse--

DR. CALDWELL

Let's move all of the transfusion  
patients into OR 8.

NURSE

The bus burn victims are in OR 8.

DR. CALDWELL

Move them to intensive.

NURSE

Okay.

DR. CALDWELL

And please tell Dr. Branchini that the  
patient in ER 9 is already on  
Cyproheptadine.

She yells down the hall--

DR. CALDWELL

Sidney, I need those wraps!

## THE LAVA FLOW

Media choppers circle like vultures.

## EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - DAY

A tour bus filled with German tourists squeezes through the barricades. Cameras snapping.

## EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

A young MAN with a camera is perched on a tree branch that extends over one of the lava tributaries. His GIRLFRIEND begs him to be careful, but it's too late. As he crawls out farther, the branch snaps and the man falls... and falls... and lands on his back. Lava splatters as his girlfriend wails.

## INT. VESUVIUS - DAY

Skinner is sighting through a microscope. Roark enters. Looks out the window at the utter chaos of emergency crews on Wilshire. It's a surrealistic tableau.

SKINNER

Got it!!!

ROARK

What?

SKINNER

Got a different gas composition than the tar pits.

ROARK

Is that good?

SKINNER

I don't know. I've never gotten different readings in such close proximity. Usually they're identical.

ROARK

Well... dammit, Skinner. We need some answers here!!! Do you know what the hell you're doing or not?

SKINNER

What do you want me to tell you?

ROARK

Tell me what the hell can we expect here?

SKINNER

Ask God.

EXT. LAVA FLOW - DAY

CLOSE ON the fiery red lava as it creeps without mercy. Envelops a pine tree. It explodes into flame.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Roark is talking with Reena on the phone--

ROARK

I want you to promise me that you'll stay put... Reena!... Right where you are... just stay in the house so I know where you are. I'm sending someone to get you.

Roark nervously watches as curious onlookers congregate. As the crowd pushes up against the police barrier, Roark loses it. Runs right up to the people--

ROARK

Get back! Get out! This is not safe!!! What's the matter with you people?!

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - DAY

A small army of Caltrans crews are using giant cranes to set concrete barriers in an intersection to contain the flow to Wilshire.

INT. MAYOR ESSICKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Essicker, immobilized by anxiety, is seated behind his desk, staring blankly at three TV monitors all displaying news coverage of the lava flow.

He reaches over to his intercom and presses the call button. There's no response.

ESSICKER

Stanley? Stanley? Helen? Helen, are you out there? For God's sake, is anyone there?

EXT. STREET - DAY

As the lava moves down the street it plunges into a storm sewer.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Lava oozes from a vent and pools on the train tracks.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

As train 99 roars over the lava on the track. The hydraulic hoses melt and disintegrate.

INT. TRAIN 99 - DAY

Misty is riding next to Derek, her head resting on his shoulder.

As the train rockets past a station stop, Misty and Derek share a look of concern. A murmur arises from the other passengers in the car.

WOMAN PASSENGER

That was my stop.

MISTY

(to Derek)

There's something wrong.

VOICE

She's right.

Misty looks up--

MISTY

Carl! What are you... ?

CARL

(interrupting)

I needed to know.

A beat.

DEREK

So now you that you know, don't you think it's about time you left her alone.

Carl gets in Derek's face--

CARL

I could hurt you in a very bad way.

DEREK  
I'm sure you could.

CARL  
Since you know that, I'll let you leave  
in good health.

DEREK  
I'm not going anywhere.

MISTY  
Derek... please. Maybe it's better if  
I talk to Carl for awhile.

CARL  
I think it's better, what do you think,  
pretty boy?

MISTY  
(to Derek)  
Please go.

Derek wants to stand up to Carl.

MISTY  
Please...

Reluctantly, Derek leaves with a parting comment to Carl--

DEREK  
This isn't over.

INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

Conference room. Big table. Maps all over walls. Milling  
around the room are Roark and **six other men**--emergency crew  
chiefs.

ROARK  
The concrete barrier walls are already  
helping us control the direction of the  
flow. How we doin' with gas?

S. CAL GAS MAN  
We shut down the main that feeds under  
Wilshire. We're working on the side  
street lines and I think we'll get  
those.

ROARK  
You think?

S. CAL GAS MAN

Mike... the gas main situation is a mess. Some we can shut down... others... I don't know. We gotta primary main that runs under the hospital..

ROARK

The hospital is evacuated except for burn emergency.

S. CAL GAS MAN

What can I tell ya? That pipe hasn't been upgraded in thirty years.

ROARK

Could it go?

S. CAL GAS MAN

Mike... with the heat from that lava and the fact that it's runnin' like water... anything could happen.

Roark punches a comm line.

ROARK

Janet, notify burn emergency at the hospital. We need to relocate those people.

(then)

Okay... fire?

FIRE CHIEF

I've got twenty-two crews coming from other parts of the city. We can handle the fire... so long as no gas mains blow.

ROARK

Ted...

POLICE

We've got 95 percent of the people out of the danger zone.

ROARK

What about the other 5 percent?

POLICE

Some people hide. Some are sick. Some deaf.

ROARK

I don't want excuses. I want them out.

A man appears at the door and knocks. Roark nods. The man enters hurriedly.

ROARK

What is it, Joe?

JOE

Mike... we got a real problem with one of the trains...99. Something's wrong with the electronics. The operator has lost control. Can't stop the train.

ROARK

How many passengers?

JOE

Best as we can figure... about a hundred.

ROARK

What's our worst case?

Joe moves to the map.

JOE

We got all conflicting routes shut down. We're running the train in a circular pattern like this.

ROARK

So no danger of collision?

JOE

No.

(then)

We just have to stop the damn thing because lava is collecting in the Highland tunnel. It's just a matter of time before it floods the active subway tunnel.

ROARK

How long before we can stop the train?

JOE

Matter of hours... with the right crew.

ROARK

Okay... let's get Stan Olberg on it now. We gotta get those people off that train.

JOE

Olberg... Christ, Mike, he's a damn drunk.



ROARK

I want him.

CUT TO: A vulture soars on thermals in an azure sky. PAN  
DOWN to:

THE MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Dr. Amy Barnes is completely stricken with fear as she  
labors on her island of sand. A cruel sun bakes her skin.  
A harsh wind dries her eyes.

She has disconnected the heavy-gauge black wire from the  
seismograph. (The other end of the wire was sucked down with  
the trailer.) Having tied the wire around the Joshua tree,  
she tugs and tugs--hoping to pull the tree over to use as a  
bridge.

A chunk of the island falls into the crevasse.

EXT. THE HIGHLAND TUNNEL - DAY

In another section of subway tunnel still under  
construction, lava is pouring in through smaller feeder  
tunnels. A city engineer in hard hat is standing on a  
scaffold with Stan Olberg.

CITY ENGINEER

At the rate this is going, this thing's  
gonna be flooded in a day.

Olberg points to the riveted plates of steel that cap the  
end of the tunnel.

OLBERG

How long's that gonna hold?

CITY ENGINEER

It's hard to say. But eventually that  
steel's gonna start to soften...

Close on the lava pushing up against the steel. The camera  
pans right through the steel to--

THE SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

where runaway train 99 clicks past at dangerous speed.

## INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

Reena enters, accompanied by an O.E.O. staffer. She moves to her father's command center. Roark is yelling into the phone.

ROARK

I can't believe what I'm hearing! Do I have to call the president and tell him?... whatdaya mean that won't do any good. He's the president, isn't he?

(then)

Look, general. I want that satellite signal and I want it now. If I don't get it now, I'm going to go to the media... all the media. And I'm going to tell them that the Department of Defense would rather adhere to some stupid-ass policy than help the people of Los Angeles.

He covers the phone and turns to Reena.

ROARK

Hi, hon. Are you okay?

REENA

Yeah.

ROARK

Good.

REENA

Why do I have to stay here?

ROARK

That's a question you don't get to ask.

## INT. O.E.O. STAFF LOUNGE - DAY

Janet, taking a coffee break from the insanity. Playing with Augie. He manages pretty well on three legs, but today he's a little crazy. Running around in circles. Agitated.

JANET

C'mere, Augie. C'mon. Sit with mama. Hey... come to mama. Augie... Augie.

Another woman who works in the office enters--

WOMAN

What's with him?

JANET

He only gets this way when we're going to have an earthquake.

WOMAN

Swell. Just swell.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

The hydraulics lines on the undercarriage of train 99 are charred and smoking.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

We follow Derek as he moves determinedly into a car where he can see Misty and Carl arguing. He enters their car.

DEREK

We've missed the last four stops. I'm going to the front of the train. Talk to the engineer.

CARL

Good for you, hero.

Derek moves in. He's ready to rip Carl's face off.

CARL

Go ahead, hot shot... you think you can hurt me?

Derek backs off and moves into the next car. Misty gets up and follows him. A frustrated Carl gets up to join them.

EXT. TRAIN 99

We track with them as they walk through a car full of school children.

INT. LEAD SUBWAY CAR

They move through to the front end of the lead car. Derek knocks on the door of the train operator. No answer. He tries the door. It's locked. Carl pushes Derek aside and jiggles the handle. Knocks hard. Then Carl shoulders the door open. A rush of wind. The front windshield is broken. The operator is dead, still smoldering from lava that splattered across his body. Misty screams.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - DAY

Caltrans workers are monitoring the lava as it is channeled down Wilshire by concrete barriers.

EXT. CNN NEWS CHOPPER - DAY

Circling the flow. Roars out over the 10 freeway. Cars are bumper to bumper as far as we can see.

INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - DAY

Roark and Skinner are huddled at Skinner's computer set up. A man yells from across the room--

MAN

Mike, 3,000 Guardsmen just left Fort Ord.

ROARK

Get them into their sectors as soon as you can. And patch me through to Col. Wayne.

SKINNER

Papa's got a brand new bag!

A map of Los Angeles County wipes across the computer screen. Skinner's typing the equivalent of 300 wpm.

SKINNER

C'mon ScanSat IX, show me your stu....

Slowly... very slowly a thermographic image crawls onto the screen starting on screen left.

ROARK

What does it mean?

SKINNER

Pretty simple, dad. Green and blue are cold. Red, orange and yellow are hot.

Starting out in the bay and moving east, we're getting blues and greens. Skinner points to a orange zone in the Hollywood Hills. Skinner freezes the wipe.

SKINNER

Got some magma cooking here.

ROARK

What else?

Skinner punches the keyboard--

The thermograph continues to wipe across the screen. There

are a couple of faint yellow spots here and there, but that's not why Skinner's jaws has dropped about three inches. In the center of the city is a bright red patch.

ROARK  
Whatsamatter?

A man yells from across the room--

MAN  
We got lava in the Beverly substation.

Roark looks over to Janet--

JANET  
Got it. I'll shut down the grid.

A T E M B L O R shakes the room.

Skinner points at the screen.

ROARK  
What is it?!

SKINNER  
The Tar Pit's hotter than our current flow. A lot hotter.

ROARK  
What does that mean, Skinner? What does that mean?

SKINNER  
This isn't a precise science. All I can tell you there's a lot of gas and heat under this spot. It could erupt more violently.

ROARK  
What's your very best guess?

SKINNER  
My best?

ROARK  
Give me your gut.

SKINNER  
If it were me?

ROARK  
If it were you.

SKINNER  
I'd send everybody to Hawaii for a  
10,000 year vacation.

EXT. CITY HALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Roark rushes Reena out of the building and moves her to an  
O.E.O. staff car.

ROARK  
C'mon, hon. Hustle it up. Let's go.

REENA  
Why aren't you going?

ROARK  
Because I have a job to do.

REENA  
Then I'm staying.

ROARK  
You've got to get out. Now!

REENA  
Why? Why do I have to go?

ROARK  
You're in danger!

REENA  
Am I in danger?

ROARK  
Yes.

REENA  
Prove it.

ROARK  
Prove it? Prove it?

REENA  
You know what... you can't prove it.

ROARK  
You're leaving and I don't want to hear  
another goddamn word!

Reena goes nose to nose with her father--

REENA  
Do you hate me?

ROARK

No... honey...

REENA

You're just afraid to admit it.

A beat.

ROARK

You're my daughter.

REENA

You hate me because I'm here and not  
mom.

She runs to the car.

This rips Roark up inside and he doesn't know what to say.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

The lava has pooled in the Highland tunnel to a depth of  
eight feet.

We move to the other side of the steel plate wall that  
separates this mammoth chamber from the active subway tunnel  
where train 99 is running.

EXT. CEDARS SINAI HOSPITAL - DAY

Air ambulance landing pad. Dr. Caldwell waits as Roark's  
chopper descends. He climbs out.

ROARK

What's the problem, doc?

DR. CALDWELL

We need the facilities we have here.  
There's no way I'm moving out.

ROARK

You're sitting on a gas main. We can't  
shut it off. If it blows, they'll be  
picking you off the moon.

DR. CALDWELL

What are the odds it will blow?

ROARK

I don't know.

DR. CALDWELL

Well, Roark, I need to know... because the odds of some of these patients surviving if we move them is zip.

ROARK

We're not playing a percentage game here, doctor. It's my call. We're going to move you to Long Beach. You'll have the best facilities.

She paces as the frustration eats at her.

DR. CALDWELL

We have a major catastrophe on our hands and you think you can handle it. Have you ever made a mistake, Roark? Have you ever made a goddamn mistake that cost someone their life?

A despairing answer--

ROARK

Yes. I have.

DR. CALDWELL

Well, for God's sake...

ROARK

(interrupting)

I'm sorry. Take whatever equipment and supplies you need. Military medical evac choppers are en route.

The ground RUMBLES AND GROWLS.

ROARK

Get out, doctor.

As he walks away--

DR. CALDWELL

Roark...

ROARK

Yeah...

DR. CALDWELL

Listen, Roark... let me stay... stay with the patients who can't be moved.

ROARK

I can't protect you.



DR. CALDWELL

I know.

EXT. DESERT SKY - DAY

The tranquility of the desert is shattered as a dozen monstrous medical evac choppers thunder toward L.A.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - DAY

We're at a position a few blocks ahead of the flow. City workers are slaving at fever pitch to position concrete barriers to keep the lava from branching out onto side streets.

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - DAY

Margo is standing at a safe distance, watching the tar pits, when the earth begins to shake. She falls to the ground as the shaking continues. Then an EXPLOSION rocks the entire area and a geyser of steam erupts from the tar pit. A fountain of white gases sprays fifty feet in the air.

Another explosion. Margo falls again.

ANGLE

Rocks and debris rain down on the area smashing cars and windows.

ANGLE

Traffic nearby--going berserk. People getting out of cars. Sheer panic.

BACK TO MARGO

She crawls to her home under the tree. From her belongings she removes a doll--an infant. She holds the doll to her bosom and runs.

INT./EXT. ROARK'S O.E.O. CHOPPER - DAY

The pilot travels north on La Cienega and banks onto Wilshire. Wilshire is mayhem. A nightmare of people, cars and emergency vehicles.

ROARK  
(to pilot)  
Drop us down.

The chopper hovers closer to the street.

## A N    E X P L O S I O N

A tremendous concussive blast. Deafening. A hundred sonic booms.

The chopper is buffeted like a Tonka Toy. Roark is thrown against the instrument panel. Glass shatters.

SKINNER

That wasn't an earthquake.

Roark feels pain and looks down at his forearm. A piece of glass is impaled in his flesh. He yanks it out.

EXT. SIDE STREETS - DAY

People flee from the area as if running from King Kong.

EXT. TAR PITS - DAY

A family of raccoons scurries from the bushes in single file.

THE O.E.O. CHOPPER - DAY

hovers over the treetops.

INT. O.E.O. CHOPPER - DAY

SKINNER

Jeeezus... I've only seen this in Japan... and it was nothing like...

ROARK

Seen what?

Roark looks--a fountain of lava. Where the tar pits used to be. A picture right out of Hawaii. A thirty--foot fountain of bright yellow-orange lava plumes. A window to the earth's mantle.

SKINNER

We're gonna need a helluva lot of sunblock for this.

Roark grabs for his phone.

ROARK

Janet... I'm at the Tar Pits... yes...  
listen... listen very carefully... I  
want you to issue an alert... fire,  
police, parameds, DWP, you name it.  
Open every FEMA channel. Expand the  
evac zone. Get everyone out in a one  
mile radius... and I mean everyone...  
yes... yes... right...  
...and I want all services on call for  
expanding the evac zone if and when we  
need it. Activate every Red Cross and  
Civil Defense shelter we have. But we  
don't want panic. We don't want panic.  
(then)  
God. They're gonna panic. Call the  
Navy at Pt. Hueneme. Transmit a FEMA  
Level Simcat Signal... yes...  
absolutely.

INT. O.E.O. CAR - DAY

Reena and Dave, the driver, cringe as a blast wave ripples  
through the car.

DAVE

Hang on, miss.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

The O.E.O. car turns a corner and speeds down a side street.

ON THE NEW ERUPTION

Another blast sends a cloud of gray smoke and literally tons  
of earth hundreds of feet into the air.

EXT. OFFICE HIGH-RISE - DAY

Six fire fighters on the roof of an office tower near the  
eruption. The volcanic debris falls to earth. The fire men  
are pummeled mercilessly.

INT. O.E.O. CAR - SAME TIME

As the debris---like hail from hell---strikes the car, Dave  
struggles for control of the speeding vehicle. Reena  
screams as a rock the size of a softball crashes through the  
windshield, sending a fusillade of glass shards into Dave's  
neck.

The car strikes a curb and flips. Tumbles across the lawn of a house. Takes out a flower garden and a corner of the sun room before its momentum is stopped by a sycamore tree. The car is on its side and all we see is the bottom. A small fire erupts from the engine.

CLOSE ON THE GAS TANK

Gasoline trickles from a puncture.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Roark and Skinner. In the background, medical personnel are wheeling patients into a staging area in the parking lot. Roark on remote phone--

ROARK  
Patch him through...

INTERCUT WITH MED EVAC CHOPPERS

ROARK  
Colonel Brack... this is Mike Roark.

COL. BRACK (FILTERED)  
This is Brack, go ahead, sir.

ROARK  
Colonel, our status now is that we have about 90 patients and 22 medical staff that are ready for transport in a staging area in the south parking lot.

ANGLE ON HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

as two orderlies wheel a man on a gurney whose body is completely wrapped in antibiotic gauze.

ROARK (FILTERED)  
What's your ETA?

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The med evac choppers as they roar over the desert.

COL. BRACK (FILTERED)  
We are about 18 minutes from you, sir.

ROARK (FILTERED)  
Just get here as damn fast as you can.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - ROARK

ROARK  
Patch me through to Stan.

EXT. TRAIN YARD - DAY

This section of track is above grade and a crew of a dozen men are ready to switch train 99 onto a runaway rail that will bring it to a stop. Stan Olberg is on the job.

OLBERG  
(into phone)  
We're all set, Mike. Should be comin'  
by us in about 20 minutes or so. I got  
three buses ready to get those folks  
outta here.

The volcano grumbles and Stan gets jumpy. His hands are shaking.

OLBERG  
I'm barely hangin' on, Mike.

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE - DAY

The scene of Reena's car accident. (The car is still on its side.) We move in close on the gasoline as it flows through the grass to the fire in the engine.

Reena's arm reaches out through the window. Then her other arm. She struggles to pull herself up through the opening. She crawls up onto the side of the car and falls off onto the ground. She crawls.

The gasoline flows nearer the engine.

Reena crawls until she can't crawl anymore.

The gas is within inches of the engine...

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Chaos. Volcanic debris. Smoke and ash. Constant rumbling...

EXT. VESUVIUS - DAY

Skinner is banging on a computer keyboard.

SKINNER

Here's the good news. This is where I  
earn my keep.

Brings up a topographical map of L.A. on the screen.

SKINNER

As long as the barriers keep going up,  
the lava will pool in this area...  
gravity at work.

He highlights a section in the center of the city.

SKINNER

As it collects, it will cool and  
harden. Which means we can contain the  
lava in this area of the city for the  
next few months or so.

ROARK

Months!!!

SKINNER

Hey, it could shut down tomorrow. Who  
knows? I thought you wanted to be  
prepared for the worst?

ROARK

I do... but... I mean, how long could  
this thing go on?

SKINNER

Ask God.

ROARK

I did. He never answers.

CUT TO:

A helicopter shot of Los Angeles. We see billowing clouds  
of ash rising from the Tar Pit eruption. Mountainous furls  
of smoke spiral out to sea. And as we pull up and away, we  
have a dreamlike sense about the city and its people.

AND WE CRASH CUT TO--

Insane gridlock. The likes of which no American city has  
ever seen. La Cienega and Melrose--locked. Sunset--locked.  
Santa Monica Blvd.--locked. San Vicente--locked. The 10--  
locked. The 405--locked. On the freeways the cars are all  
headed out of town in all lanes--there is no incoming  
traffic.

Men, women, and children, in a mass exodus, are walking  
along the shoulders and between the cars.

Gray ash is falling like snow.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Dozens of evacuee patients and medical staff are gathering.

Dr. Caldwell and an orderly wheel a burn victim out of the building. The hair is burned off his chest, face and head. He's shaking in pain.

DR. CALDWELL  
(to paramed)  
This man needs IV. 10 cc Demerol.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

the heavy and powerful medical evac choppers whomp toward the city.

INSIDE THE LEAD CHOPPER

Col. Brack and co-pilot man the controls of the ship while a half dozen men prep gear in the cargo bay.

EXT. STREET - DAY

We follow a stream of flowing lava as it flows down a street. The camera pans up and we see the hospital complex in the distance. The music is filled with portent.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The medical evac choppers hold perfect formation as they pass over the city. Smoke and ash darken the sky before them.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

The sky is grey. Ash is falling. Fires burn. It's a chaotic war zone.

Roark and Skinner watch as the med evac choppers approach.

SKINNER  
They can't fly in this stuff.

CLOSE ON

the airborne soot and ash as it is sucked through the engine of a helicopter.

ON HELICOPTER

The engine on the lead chopper begins to fail.

INT. LEAD CHOPPER - DAY

CO. BRACK  
Can you hold it?

SOLDIER  
No.

The chopper shakes and rattles violently as the engine sputters.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

SKINNER  
They're pulling too much debris!!!

BACK TO HELICOPTER

It looks as though the chopper will make it to the ground. Make it, that is, if it weren't for another med evac chopper dropping straight out of the sky at 60 miles and hour. On its way to a fatal landing it clips a rotor on the lead chopper.

A piece of blade slices the top off a palm tree.

The chopper impacts the side of the hospital. No explosion. No fire. Just pieces.

INT. LEAD MED EVAC CHOPPER

COL. BRACK  
Abandon mission! All pilots, abandon mission!

ANGLE

The other choppers, their engines fighting for clean air, break formation to fend for themselves.



ANGLE ON

the rescue workers who are staging patients to board the rescue choppers. They look to each other in panic.

ON ROARK

as he runs to Caldwell who's treating her patient.

ROARK

Move everybody into the mall. It's the only place near here with emergency back-up power.

Caldwell ponders the mangled building where she was working less than an hour ago.

ON SKINNER

who's holding the hand of a victim, an elderly woman.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I don't know you.

SKINNER

Skinner... the name is Skinner.

ELDERLY WOMAN

You have nice eyes. Kind eyes.

SKINNER

Thank you.

ELDERLY WOMAN

When I get to heaven, I'll put in a good word for you.

And with that, she gives up her last breath. Skinner gently folds her hands on her body.

SKINNER

You put in a good word for all of us.

EXT. THE TAR PITS - DUSK

An explosive blast. This violent fountain of lava shoots a glob of lava through the air.

ANOTHER ANGLE

We follow this glob of lava as it flies over the treetops and lands on a car, demolishing it.

(For the record: this remarkable phenomenon is called "lava bombs." They occur when gas pressure is significant and pieces of lava are hurled through the air. They cool as they go and by the time they land, are red hot pieces of rock, but their interiors are molten and they often break open. Because they contain gases, sometimes they explode like fireworks. In recent eruptions in Iceland, bombs that landed as much as two-thirds of a mile from the eruption weighed as much as 60 pounds. Bombs carried half that distance could weigh a third of a ton.)

#### THE TAR PITS

Another lava bomb is launched. This one strikes the side of a 20-story building on the eighth floor, exploding the windows and tearing up ten offices before it comes to a stop, igniting the carpet.

#### ANGLE

Emergency vehicles descend on the area in a storm of flashing lights.

#### EXT. STREET - DUSK

Somewhere. Reena is walking--barely walking. She's confused and disoriented.

#### THE VOLCANO

explodes and launches another lava bomb. This 500 lb. mass of red rock hurtles through the night and lands in the DWP central power transformer station #49. Hundreds of thousands of volts are released as the critical equipment is demolished. The shower of sparks looks like the 4th of July at the Statue of Liberty.

#### EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DUSK

Three more vultures are circling in anticipation of a feast of warm flesh.

Piece by piece, Amy Barnes' island of sand is falling into the surrounding crevasse. It's half the size of when we last saw it. Speeding on the adrenalin of fear, her darting eyes study every inch of the perimeter of her atoll in preparation for the next sand slide. She pushes and rocks the Joshua tree back and forth with bleeding hands, struggling to lay it over the crevasse.

Then...

The half of the island she isn't on drops. Just falls into the darkness below. Her entire body shakes as she waits for her piece to go. Only it doesn't. She's left sitting atop a chimney of sand no bigger than a small car...

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DUSK

Stan Olberg and the crew of men are still working on the tracks--to stop the train. A worker approaches Olberg.

WORKER

We've got the switch feeds attached.  
As soon as the relay's set, we're ready  
to go.

Olberg dials his cell phone.

OLBERG

(phone)

Mike... another few minutes and we're  
all set.

Stan moves to his truck, reaches in under the seat and removes a pint of whiskey. He takes a long hard look and tosses it on the ground.

EXT. BEVERLY CENTER -- SAME

Roark on cellular. Standing next to a paramedic truck. Medical workers running everywhere. Ash falling.

ROARK

Good work, Stan! Let's get these  
people out of there! Yes. Do whatever  
you have to.

Roark flips the phone shut. Feels good about stopping the train. Looks around. Moves to the head cop.

ROARK

Where's Skinner?... the guy in the  
black bus?

COP

He took off.

ROARK

Where?

COP

I don't know. Headed that way.

He points toward the Tar Pit eruption.

EXT. STREET NEAR THE TAR PIT ERUPTION - NIGHT

At a "safe" distance from the tar pits, a local TV broadcast truck is ready to bounce a signal up. Diane Wurtz' cameraman counts down with his fingers... five, four, three, two.....one.

WURTZ

We have a violent volcanic eruption here at the La Brea Tar Pits, in the heart of the city. Danger from volcanic ash, gas line explosions, fires and airborne gases could render the city uninhabitable for weeks if not months. All evacuees should move to areas south of here. Federal emergency relief crews are establishing tent cities.

Just then a lava bomb takes out the satellite dish in a shower of molten sparks. Everyone flees.

WURTZ

(to cameraman)

Keep rolling, Stanley.

STANLEY

Oh yeah? ... screw you.

He drops the camera and runs off.

EXT. ROARK HOUSE - NIGHT

Reena staggers across the front lawn--toward her father's house.

An explosion outside rocks the neighborhood. Reena falls to the ground, then looks up to see a lava bomb buried into the front of a house down the street. The roof ignites.

Reena flees the neighborhood.

EXT. TRAIN YARD - NIGHT

Stan Olberg is near drunk. He checks his watch and signals to the crew chief--

OLBERG

She'll be comin' out any minute now.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Train 99 rockets down the tracks.

EXT. THE TAR PIT ERUPTION - NIGHT

The volcano launches a massive lava bomb.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - SECONDS LATER

The lava bomb slams into Hollywood Blvd.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

The tunnel beneath Hollywood Blvd. starts to give way. A steel girder falls on the train--between two cars. Tears through the coupling.

INT. TRAIN - SAME TIME

Misty, Derek, Carl and the other passengers are tossed around the car.

INT. TUNNEL

The cars separate. The front four roar down the tracks. The rear three cars are pushing the steel girder down the track in a fusillade of sparks. They grind to a halt.

INT. REAR CAR

Misty struggles to stand as the car comes to a stop. She looks over to Carl who has a head wound. She moves to Derek who is unconscious.

EXT. TRAIN YARD - NIGHT

Stan Olberg watches as four cars barrel out of the subterranean tunnel into the yard. The cars run onto the runaway track and come to a stop. As men pry the doors open, paramedics rush in.

CREW MEMBER

Where the hell are the other three cars?

OLBERG

I don't know.

He paces in a panic. Takes a deep breath.

OLBERG

Better patch me on through to Mike.

INT. REAR CAR - NIGHT

Misty is sitting with Derek's head on her lap, trying to ease him back to consciousness.

MISTY

Derek. It's okay, Derek. I'm here.  
You're going to be alright.

EXT. TAR PITS - NIGHT

Roark--in his Scout--speeds in and parks next to Vesuvius.

ROARK

(on phone)

Are they alive?... Yes... Can you make  
contact?...

(then)

Listen, Stan, I will get you a crew  
within 20 minutes. Just stay put.

Roark clicks off jumps out of the car. Looks around to see Skinner walking toward the volcano in a futuristic metallic suit.

ROARK

Skinner!!!

Skinner can't hear him.

ROARK

Skinner... dammit!

Roark dashes into Vesuvius. Returns with a suit like Skinner's. Roark speaks into the headset.

ROARK

Skinner! Skinner! Do you hear me?!  
Skinner!

SKINNER (FILTERED)

Hey... drop the volume.

ROARK

Whaddaya think you're doing?

SKINNER (FILTERED)  
I need samples from the lava.

ROARK  
Skinner... get back here!

SKINNER (FILTERED)  
Look, dad, this is my life. I was born  
to do this.

Roark grabs his phone--

ROARK  
Give me Hanson.

CLOSE ON THE ERUPTION

We get a real good sense of the majesty of this thing. The  
roar and thunder of the lava fountain is deafening. Skinner  
stands in awe of the young volcano as though he were looking  
into the face of God.

SKINNER (FILTERED)  
She's magnificent. Utterly  
magnificent.

HOLD.

SKINNER (FILTERED)  
You know something, Roark... my old man  
was never proud of me. Never proud  
that I was his son.

This talk worries Roark.

ROARK  
That's far enough.

Skinner walks toward the budding volcano, its plumes  
punching over fifty feet high.

Roark is startled when approached from behind by a fire  
captain, Hanson.

HANSON  
Is he fuckin' nuts?

ROARK  
What took you so long?

HANSON  
Kiss my soot-stained ass, pal.

Two hook and ladder trucks pull in behind Vesuvius.  
Skinner speaks and we hear what Roark hears--

SKINNER (FILTERED)

Oh my God...

ROARK

What is it?

SKINNER (FILTERED)

This is so amazing... it's so...

SKINNER'S POV

He stands before this wall of molten rock. Fiery orange globs splatter around him like sparks from a hundred welder's torches. (Hold on this and crank up the James Horner score.)

ON ROARK AND HANSON

SKINNER (FILTERED)

Getting hot in here, dad.

ROARK

Okay. Come on back.

ON SKINNER

The reflection of the lava on his mask. This is a peak religious experience for Skinner.

We watch as he fearlessly extends a gas-reading wand toward the lava. Closer and closer... until his form disappears in the curtain of steam and gases that surround the base of the eruption.

ROARK

Skinner... Skinner... get back here!

ON SKINNER

He's frighteningly close to the lava.

SKINNER

I would like to lie down and let the earth cover me. I would become part of the earth.

ROARK

Skinner... you're talking nuts.

SKINNER

No, dad. I'm talking what is. This is. I am standing in the essence of it all.



HOLD on this image of a small man standing next to a great earth.

ON ROARK

Roark covers his comm mike and turns to Hanson--

ROARK  
Get the hoses up here.

Hanson leaves.

A gas explosion causes a flare in the lava.

ON SKINNER

Globs of lava splatter across his suit, knocking him to the ground.

Moving lava creeps nearer.

ON ROARK

ROARK  
Skinner... Skinner... talk to me!  
Dammit!

No response.

ROARK  
Skinner!... Skinner!

The fire men hurriedly unfurl the hoses while Hanson barks orders.

ON SKINNER

He's down. Motionless. The lava is ten feet away and creeping closer.

BACK TO ROARK

Roark turns to Hanson and yells--

ROARK  
I've lost him. I'm going in.

He rips off his comm set and tosses it aside.

ROARK  
Cover me.

Hanson signals and the men turn on two streams.

Roark slips into the silver suit. He moves toward the lava flow. His steps become more tentative as he bakes in the scorching waves of heat.

The two hoses are pointed straight up in the air and the water cascades down on Roark.

Through the rain of the hoses, Roark is confronted with the roaring, surging lava. He enters the steam--looking, looking for Skinner.

He can't take the heat. Turns his back on the lava and moves in an expanding circle... looking... looking. Skinner? Where's Skinner?

Overcome with noxious gases, Roark falls to his hands and knees, struggling with consciousness. His psyche finds images--

Grey images--of rushing water--of Roark in a pickup driving insanely down a dirt road aside a flooded river. Roark looking out into the angry brown rushing current at a woman caught in a mesh of fallen trees.

BONNIE

Help me! Help me!

She's breathing the rising water into her lungs with every heaving gasp.

BONNIE

Oh, God! Please. Mike!

Fire hose water rips across Roark's suit and he comes to his senses. He crawls. Crawls. Gotta get out.

Then he spots Skinner. Lying there. Only a few feet from the flow of the lava. It's too hot. Roark can't get to him. He yells--

ROARK

Skinner!!! Skinner!!!

A glob of lava splats on Roark's arm and burns through the suit as he wipes it away with his glove. He screams in pain. He motions for Hanson to turn a stream directly on him.

HANSON

(to men)

Crank it down!!!

They shift the flow of the water to a softer spray. Even with a soft flow, it batters against his body. He moves inside the steam barrier. He fights and struggles to stand-

-like a punch-weary boxer. He moves in on Skinner's body. It feels to Roark as though his whole body will "combust" at any moment. He's feet away from Skinner...moving closer... closer... closer. He reaches out and grabs Skinner by the shoulder--only seconds away from being incinerated.

FIRE CREW'S POV .

The men watch as Roark drags Skinner. It takes every erg of energy in Roark's body to get Skinner to the point where the men can move in and take him.

Roark strips the covered hood off his own head, and sucks air like a man suffocating. He falls to the ground and scoops water from the pavement into his mouth.

EXT. MID-WILSHIRE - NIGHT

Bobby Shine stands alone in the street. His placard reads---

"And The Lord caused fire and brimstone  
to rain down on Sodom and Gomorrah"

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

The three stranded cars sit like coffins on the track. The tunnel lights flicker eerily.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Carl walks into the next car where people are nursing their battered bodies. As he nears the end of the second car, ready to move into the third and final car, the tunnel rumbles and tons of rock fall. The third car and everyone in it is crushed.

IN THE FIRST CAR

Misty cringes with the deafening thunder of falling rock. Carl enters.

MISTY

What happened?

CARL

The tunnel caved in. The first car is gone.

MISTY'

Is anybody... ?

CARL

No.

MISTY

What should we do?

CARL

I don't know.

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - NIGHT

Vesuvius looks as though it's parked at the gateway to hell.

INT. VESUVIUS - NIGHT

Two paramedics are tending to Skinner when Roark enters. Skinner looks up.

SKINNER

Hi.

ROARK

How ya doin'?

SKINNER

Oh... medium rare to well.

PARAMEDIC

I don't see any tissue damage, but somebody should take a good look at him.

ROARK

Thanks. Thanks for your help.

PARAMEDIC

You got it.

The medics leave.

Roark sits down on the bench next to Skinner.

SKINNER

They told me you came in and dragged me out.

ROARK

Oh... hell... I woulda done it for a sane person.

SKINNER

Thanks.

(then)

But I just want you to know. If I would have died out there... I couldn't think of a better way to go. Do you dig what I'm saying?

ROARK

Yeah. It's a guy thing.

SKINNER

Yeah. It's a guy thing.

Roark's phone rings.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Stan Olberg--with a big cup of coffee--is standing in halogen light with a group of Caltrans workers. The subway tunnel is plugged with earth and debris. A massive dozer/digger growls to life and rolls in to remove the rubble separating them from the three train cars.

OLBERG

We gotta work real fast here, Mike.  
The Highland Tunnel is filling fast.  
It could go any time... yeah... I know...

(then)

I won't let ya down.

INT. HIGHLAND TUNNEL - UNDER CONSTRUCTION - NIGHT

The lava has half filled the gigantic chamber. The steel plate wall is stretching and groaning from the load.

EXT. TAR PIT ERUPTION - NIGHT

Lava continues to flow in all directions. The palm trees look like burnt match sticks.

Ash and soot blast into the sky like dark gray dusk squeezed from a vacuum cleaner bag.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

Reena fights to navigate through a throng of people--all fleeing the neighborhood. Making their way like lemmings to the sea.

INT. ANOTHER SECTION OF SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Roark and Skinner are standing with Stan Olberg on the other side of the subway cave-in.

OLBERG

The Highland tunnel is going to give way. There's too much debris here. If anyone is alive in there, we can't get them out in time.

ROARK

We've got three cars full of people.

SKINNER

They might be dead already.

ROARK

Maybe we could blast the tunnel between the lava and the train. Create a dam or sorts.

OLBERG

Too risky. It's too unstable. We could bring the whole tunnel down on them.

Roark paces.

ROARK

We're gonna get these people out!!!

HOLD.

ROARK

C'mon, fellas...

SKINNER

We cool the lava.

ROARK

What?

SKINNER

We cool the lava.

(then)

We did it in Iceland. Can you get water in that tunnel?

ROARK

How much?

SKINNER

We need something like...

OLBERG  
(interrupting)  
We've got the "B" line of the aqueduct.

SKINNER  
How much water...?

OLBERG  
A couple million gallons.

ROARK  
Skinner?

SKINNER  
All it has to do is cool the lava  
enough to create a hard crust around  
it. That will keep it from flowing.

ROARK  
What about the people in the train  
cars?

OLBERG  
It's a helluva lotta water. My guess  
is they'll have a chance... as long as  
they stay in the cars.

ROARK  
They will have no chance if that lava  
gets out of the Highland tunnel.  
(then)  
Get on it, Stan.

EXT. 405 FREEWAY - NIGHT

Like refugees torn from their homes by war, men, women, and  
children are trudging south, lugging their most precious  
possessions.

INT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Roark and Skinner enter. Janet approaches.

JANET  
Mike...

ROARK  
Yeah...

JANET  
I got some bad news...

ROARK

What is it?

JANET

Reena's missing.

Roark body tightens.

ROARK

What happened?

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - NIGHT

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Most readers are familiar with the Beverly Center. I've taken the creative license to rearrange things a little.)

The main floor is filled with injured. At least three dozen. Nurses, paramedics and orderlies work their way through the crowd, treating who they can.

Dr. Caldwell is barking orders to an associate.

DR. CALDWELL

Get this woman two parts of blood and start an Ampicillin drip.

She moves to another patient.

PATIENT

I was the commander of a C-class destroyer in the big war.

DR. CALDWELL

And a damn good one, I bet. How are we doing here, Mr. Lafferty?

LAFFERTY

I can't feel anything. I think I'm going to die.

DR. CALDWELL

Someday... somewhere... you're going to die. Just don't do it on my watch. That's an order.

LAFFERTY

Aye-aye, captain.

She saunters wearily to another doctor and tosses her stethoscope over her shoulder.



COLLEAGUE

To think I cancelled my vacation in  
France this week because my work load  
was backed up.

Caldwell smiles. Sees the irony.

DR. CALDWELL

My husband left me because I work too  
hard. Whaddaya think?

They share a chuckle.

EXT. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS - ROOF - NIGHT

Roark and Skinner gaze out over the city at the fires and  
destruction. Looks like a war zone.

ROARK

Skinner...

SKINNER

Yeah...

ROARK

My kid is out there...

SKINNER

I know.

Roark is the lowest of low. Beat down. Exhausted.

SKINNER

What else can you do here? All the  
emergency teams and systems are in  
place as much as they can be. You did  
your job. All you can do now is let  
nature take her course.

Roark looks at Skinner.

SKINNER

Go... find your daughter.

(then)

She needs you.

Skinner puts his hand on Roark's shoulder.

SKINNER

Go...

ROARK

Do me a favor...

SKINNER

Sure...

ROARK

Go someplace safe.

SKINNER

Safe?! Safe?! Hell, dad... I'm comin' with you.

A smile of gratitude breaks across Roark's face. They pull each other into embrace.

EXT. VENTURA FREEWAY - NIGHT

National Guard vehicles--as far as the eye can see--are backed up in the southbound lane near Woodland Hills. With the outgoing bumper-to-bumper traffic in all lanes, they don't stand a chance of getting in.

At the head of the pack is Col. Wayne, standing on the hood of his Jeep, sighting down the freeway. He yells to his second in command, Lt. Turl.

COL. WAYNE

Tell Roark we're comin' in on foot.

LT. TURL

But sir...

COL. WAYNE

But what? We can't fly in. We don't have ships. We sure as hell can't drive in and unless you got a shitload a donkeys some place, we're gonna march in.

LT. TURL

Yes, sir.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Derek is conscious but weak.

CARL

We can't just sit here.

ANOTHER PASSENGER

I'm with you, pal. I say we march out of here.

DEREK

How do you know where to go?

CARL  
There's only one way out.

DEREK  
I don't like it.

MISTY  
Me either.

CARL  
(to Misty)  
You're coming with me.

MISTY  
No, Carl.

CARL  
What are you going to do, stay here  
with loverboy and wait for the rest of  
the tunnel to cave in?

ANOTHER PASSENGER  
I'm getting out of here.

ANOTHER  
Me too.

Derek stands and faces the group.

DEREK  
If you stay here you have the  
protection of the train car. If you go  
out there... you have nothing.

CARL  
Whoever wants to live, come with me.

Most of the two dozen people are confused and frightened. A  
half dozen gather to go with Carl.

CARL  
(to Misty)  
This is your last chance.

Misty is in terrible conflict. She stands and joins Carl.

Derek rushes Carl and slams into his body. Knocks him flat  
on his back. Carl throws him off. Derek comes again. Hits  
Carl in the face. Spit flies. Carl shakes it off. Derek  
is too weak from injury. Carl hits him in the side of the  
head. Hard. Derek goes down. Carl kicks him in the face.  
Blood flies. Carl kicks him in the gut.

MISTY

No! Stop it!

She jumps on Carl's back. He stops.

Misty bends down--her face close to Derek's.

We see her as a frightened little girl. The only safety she has known has been with Carl.

DEREK

Don't go.

MISTY

I have to.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY

Roark, tired and beaten, driven by primitive forces, runs to catch up to a man and wife, burdened with as many of their worldly possessions as they can carry. He shows them the photo of his daughter. They have not seen her.

INT. CITY HALL PARKING GARAGE -- DAY

Mayor Essicker climbs into his Lincoln Town Car and fumbles for his keys. Starts the engine. Screeches through the garage. Drives right through the barrier arm and out onto the empty street.

INT. MAYOR ESSICKER'S CAR - DAY

As he drives, he looks around. Never seen the city a ghost town. Fumbles with the radio, looking for a Civil Defense channel.

He's shaken by the sound of a thousand cannons.

We watch as a lava bomb soars through the air like a comet. It lands on a street and skids a hundred yards in a shower of sparks and splashes of lava. Annihilates eight parked cars.

The lava bomb takes out the front corner of Essicker's car. The windshield shatters and the Mayor is splattered with lava. The car spins a 360 and comes to a stop. Essicker can't move. His breathing becomes very labored. He gasps and sucks for air.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Skinner encounters two people carrying an injured person. He shows them the photo of Reena. We see heads shaking.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY

Roark is moving northwest down an alley, paralleling San Vicente. The lava is flowing down San Vicente. Less than a mile away, the young volcano roars and grumbles. Roark comes to a cross street. He sees Reena on the other side of San Vicente. She's moving as fast as she can, clutching her ribs.

ROARK

Reena!... Hey!... Reena!

Between the roar of the volcano and the sirens, she can't hear him.

ROARK

Reeeeeena!!!

She stops for a moment--as though she might have heard him. Then moves on.

Roark runs closer to the lava, yelling and waving his arms. But it's no use. He's turned back by waves of torrid heat.

EXT. STREET - DAY

We move with Reena. Ahead--the Beverly Center. People have congregated in the street around the mall. Three volunteers distribute food.

Reena moves to the corner of Beverly and La Cienega, passing through a group of L.A. refugees. The ground-floor windows have been broken to allow passage into the mall. Reena enters.

INT. MALL - DAY

The inventory and racks in the Bullocks Men's Store have been pushed to the side to make room for injured people--lying on cots or blankets on the floor.

As Reena passes through, she sees the burned, the broken, the victims of shock, of fumes. It's frightening--horrifying for her to see this.

A TEMBLOR rolls through causing the lights to flicker and dim. Reena falls to her knees.

An ELDERLY WOMAN, a nurse, helps her up.

NURSE

Easy...

REENA

I think my ribs are broken.

NURSE

Come with me.

The nurse escorts her to the central arcade of the mall, navigates through a flotilla of gurneys. Takes Reena to Dr. Caldwell.

NURSE

Might have broken ribs.

Dr. Caldwell pokes around Reena's rib cage. Reena winces in pain.

DR. CALDWELL

I can wrap it for you. That's it.  
You'll be okay. When we get out of  
this mess, go have it taken care of  
properly.

Dr. Caldwell departs from her businesslike demeanor long enough to tenderly brush Reena's hair back from her forehead.

DR. CALDWELL

After I wrap you, try to find a place  
to lie and keep still. That will help  
the pain.

REENA

Thank you.

EXT. L.A. STREET - DAY

Roark is walking alone. He looks a half block ahead to the river of molten rock running down Beverly Blvd. when he hears the voice--

VOICE

Hey!

Roark turns--it's Skinner--running toward him.

SKINNER

Any luck?

ROARK  
Yeah. I saw her.

SKINNER  
Where?

ROARK  
On the other side of the lava. She  
looked like she was injured. She  
couldn't hear me.  
(then)  
She couldn't hear me.

A wave of powerful emotion sweeps over Roark.

SKINNER  
At least you know she's alive.

ROARK  
I hope to God she's okay. If I lose  
her... if I lose her...  
(then)  
I never forgave her for her mother's  
death.  
(then)  
I was wrong... so wrong.

SKINNER  
You can fix that.

ROARK  
I know... I know. I just want the  
chance to tell her I'm sorry.

He weeps.  
Skinner puts his hand on Roark's shoulder.

ROARK  
I just want to tell her I'm sorry.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

With Carl and Misty leading the way, the group of five men  
and one woman make their way through the dark tunnel.

INT. THE SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Other side of town. Stan and a group of DWP men are walking  
down another stretch of subway tunnel. As they proceed,  
they come upon the steel plate barrier wall that separates  
the Highland tunnel from the Train 99 tunnel. The bottom  
half of the wall is glowing red and rivulets of lava are  
oozing from popped rivets.

OLBERG

This thing's gonna bust up! Get me  
Lorenzo now!!!

INT. DWP STATION 695 - DAY

It's a massive DWP facility filled with colossal pipes and  
powerful turbines. Ernst Lorenzo is a robust man with a  
handlebar moustache.

LORENZO

(on phone)

I am ready when you give the call.

BACK TO SUBWAY TUNNEL

Olberg snaps his phone shut and signals to his men.

OLBERG

Let's get outta here!

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Carl, Misty and the others. Misty grabs Carl's arm.

MISTY

This doesn't feel right.

He pulls her along.

CARL

C'mon. We don't have time for your  
nonsense.

MISTY

I mean it, Carl.

He yanks at her again.

CARL

I mean it, too.

MISTY

Carl! No! I'm going back!

CARL

You'll never make it. You'll die. Is  
that what you want?

MISTY

No.



CARL

I need you.

MISTY

I know you do.

As they walk on, Misty quietly drops back. Farther... farther...

EXT. STREET - DAY

A forlorn Janet is walking on a vacant street. No Augie.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY

The main atrium is jammed with people--injured, hungry, homeless, frightened. The ground-floor stores have been mined for supplies.

The camera moves across this sea of suffering and comes to rest on Reena as she finds a private alcove under an escalator and sits. Every movement brings pain. And with each shot of pain, a moan. And a tear. Gently she rocks back and forth and sings in a broken whisper.

REENA

Hush little baby don't you cry. Mama's gonna sing you a lullaby...

EXT. STREET - DAY

On the sidewalk across the street from the Beverly Center, Bobby Shine obsessively parades back and forth carrying his placard--

"And I saw the fourth horseman  
and on him was written death"

EXT. STREET - DAY

Roark and Skinner are two blocks from the Center. A woman passes them and Roark shows her the picture of Reena... The woman shakes her head.

A TEMBLOR rocks the area.

And this is more than a temblor... it's a frightening grinding sound.

SKINNER

Oh Christ.

A block ahead--the intersection of La Cienega and Beverly erupts. The asphalt breaks apart like pie crust and a plume of lava sprays ten to fifteen feet in the air.

The two men are knocked to the ground.

ANGLE

The refugees around the mall panic and run.

ANGLE

Roark and Skinner move toward the mall, swimming upstream in a river of frightened souls.

CLOSE ON THE LAVA

as it runs into the Center at Beverly and La Cienega. And it flows around the building.

ROARK AND SKINNER

are moving toward the Center to the south of the eruption. As they approach, they encounter the nurse who helped Reena, pushing a gurney.

Roark looks at the patient. It's Mayor Essicker. He looks like Stephen Boyd after the chariot race in "Ben Hur." Essicker's hand reaches out and grabs Skinner.

ESSICKER

I didn't know... I didn't know...

Skinner pries Essicker's hand away.

Roark shows the photo of Reena to the nurse.

ROARK

Have you seen her?

She examines the photo.

NURSE

Yeah. I helped her.

ROARK

Is she okay?

NURSE

I think so...

ROARK  
Do you know where she is?

NURSE  
She's in there...

They look at the monstrosity of a building whose access is blocked by a flowing moat of lava.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY

A stream of lava, like a large bright orange snake, is flowing through what was the Bullocks Men's Store, incinerating the cots, bedding and supplies of the people who have fled into the main corridor of the mall. Nothing stops this steaming, fiery mass of moving earth.

INT. MAIN MALL AREA - DAY

Bedlam. The mall refugees are scrambling to get to the upper floors.

ANGLE

A panicked MAN ascends the stairs. Throws a slower man aside where he is trampled by others.

ANGLE

Two medics, carrying an injured woman on a canvas stretcher, are trying to make it up the escalator, but others, driven by sheer animal panic, won't make room.

ANGLE

The lava flows into the main mall, across the terrazzo floor, and into the seating pit where it vaporizes the carpet and begins to fill the area as though it were a pond.

The decorative water fountain continues to work.

A COY POND

begins to bubble as the fish flop on the surface of the water, sucking their last breath.

CLOSE ON

The lava. It has filled the sunken seating area and is beginning to overflow onto the main floor. A rivulet--about two feet wide--runs into B. Dalton. A cardboard floor

display featuring Michael Crichton paperbacks ignites like a burning bush.

ANGLE

Reena in her private cove. As others stampede for an exit to what is becoming a fiery tomb, she crawls to her knees and tries to stand. Faints. Slumps to the floor. Unconscious.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY

A utility corridor near the south end of the mall. A couple of men have pried the metal doors open. It's a seemingly endless 12 x 12 concrete tunnel that houses electrical and plumbing. A couple dozen people pour into the tunnel. The lead man, a doctor, sights down the corridor and yells to the others--

DOCTOR

This will take us out of here.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Dr. Amy Barnes has succeeded in tipping over the Joshua tree. It's a matter of minutes before her tiny perch of sand is consumed by the hungry blackness that waits for her.

She starts out across the bridge, needles spiking into her hands and knees. She crawls halfway across and looks down into the pit below. She crawls another two feet. Sensing success, she crawls another foot and reaches to touch the sand on the other side.... when...

... her island gives way... the whole thing collapses. The Joshua tree drops. She screams and grabs onto the wire. The tree is dangling below her. She digs her feet into the sand wall and tries to pull herself up on the wire.

An inch at a time, she makes her way up the wire and over the edge onto the sand. She stands and backs away from the crevasse--farther and farther as she begins to laugh and cry for joy.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Carl and his group come upon the steel plate barrier wall that's holding back the reservoir of lava in the Highland Tunnel. The steel is glowing orange. It's bulging as the metal softens, ready to burst at any moment.

WOMAN

Oh, God!

MAN

Which way?!! Which way?!

CARL

Shuttup!

ANOTHER MAN

This way!

A small corner of steel plate fails and they are sprayed with droplets of lava, causing them to jump and scream as though being attacked by millions of bees.

One man falls to the ground--unconscious--as a splatter of lava melts into his skull.

The woman's hair ignites. She moves through the darkness, a screaming torch.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Misty runs through the darkness, each breath laden with fear.

An arm reaches out and grabs her. She screams.

MISTY

No!

Then... relax... it's Derek. He's injured. It's all he can do to stand.

DEREK

Where's Carl?

MISTY

I don't know.

She pulls his arm around her and helps him walk.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Stan Olberg and his crew emerge to a street level subway station. Stan flips open his phone.

OLBERG

Lorenzo... let it go! Let it go!

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

Too late. The lava pushes through the steel plate wall like breath against bubble gum. The wall disintegrates--lava floods into the subway tunnel.

INT. DWP STATION 695 - DAY

Lorenzo pushes six buttons on a control panel and yells into the phone.

LORENZO

Here she comes!

EXT. AQUEDUCT PIPELINE NEAR LAKE PIRU - DAY

A juncture in the pipeline. A mammoth relay causes the water to flow down an adjacent trunk line.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - SAME TIME

Derek and Misty enter the car. She helps him to lay down on the floor.

MISTY

I wish I could do more to help you.

DEREK

I know... I know.

HOLD.

He touches the side of her face with his hand.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL

The wooden railroad ties burst into flame on impact as the river of lava tumbles toward the three stranded subway cars.

INT. DWP STATION 695 - DAY

Lorenzo carefully monitors a control panel.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - DAY

The lava moves through the tunnel with relentless pace.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL

The train cars sit silently on the tracks. The pale amber lights flicker.

INT. ANOTHER SUBWAY TUNNEL

Thousands and thousands of gallons of water tumble from a DWP feeder pipe into the subway tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL

The lava snakes.

INT. ANOTHER TUNNEL

The roaring surge of water.

INT. TUNNEL

The lava.

INT. THE TRAIN CAR

It's getting hotter. Everyone knows it.

INT. TUNNEL

The lava.

INT. TRAIN

Misty stands and sights down the tracks into the darkness.

INT. ANOTHER TUNNEL

The water.

BACK TO THE TRAIN

In the far distance Misty can see the lava coming.

It's going to devour the train. She watches as her destiny crawls toward her.

100 feet... 90 feet... 80 feet...

Then... Carl's face appears in the window. It's horribly disfigured from the splatter of lava. Misty screams as Carl claws at the window.

MISTY

Carl!!!

Derek struggles to get up.

Then Misty sees it...

... the water coming like a wall of bricks. Overtaking the lava. A couple of million gallons.

MISTY

Down! Get down! Everybody get down.  
Hold on to something! Everybody hold  
on.

She falls to the floor and wrap her arms around Derek...  
then grabs onto the legs of the seat.

MISTY

Hold on to me. Just hold on as tight  
as you can.

DEREK

Misty....

MISTY

Hold me!

The lava is fifty feet from the train when the water overtakes the lava. White steam erupts from the interaction of the two.

The steam blast is the first to hit the train.

CARL

is blown over the train and mashed against the rocks.

ANGLE

Passengers grab on for dear life.

TUNNEL

The water hits the train. Glass shatters. A man is washed out a window. A woman is slammed into the back of the car.

Misty and Derek are submerged in the powerful torrent.



ANGLE

A man clinging to the top of his seat cannot resist the force of the water and is washed out of the train car.

The deluge ransacks the train car.

A woman is sucked from her seat and blasted out the back window.

The water rises to nearly fill the tunnel. Everything that isn't fastened down is swept away.

ANGLE ON THE TUNNEL

where the debris that buried the first car is washed away like driftwood.

The water surges.

BACK TO THE SUBWAY CAR

The rushing water gradually subsides. Half of the people that were in the car are gone.

Misty and Derek are coughing furiously. Misty helps Derek to sit as he spits up water. She rubs his back.

MISTY

It's okay. You're with me.

INT. CONCRETE UTILITY TUNNEL - DAY

The Beverly Center refugees march along.

ANGLE

what they don't see is what lies ahead. The utility corridor feeds directly into the subway tunnel.

ANGLE ON THE REFUGEES

An elderly husband and wife are helping each other along.

HUSBAND

The first thing I want to do when we get out of here is have a nice big ice cream cone. Maybe a triple scoop of Macadamia Madness.

WIFE

I want to hug our grandchildren. Just hug 'em and hug 'em and hug 'em.

He looks at her fondly--

HUSBAND  
That's why I married you.

They hear the sound of the crashing. Panic sweeps over the group.

SOMEONE  
Quick. The other way!!!

They turn and flee from the sound of the water--as best they can.

A man on a stretcher is abandoned by his helpers. Others whose injuries are too great for speed are left behind.

The elderly couple exchanges a look of painful knowing.

The faster ones of the group run ahead. They scramble to find another way out. There is none.

The elderly couple stops. They embrace.

The wall of water consumes them.

EXT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY - HELICOPTER SHOT

The lava surrounds the Center like a river flowing around a midstream island.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY

The ground floor is nearly devoid of people. The temperature has risen by thirty degrees.

ON THE ESCALATOR

Dr. Caldwell helps an elderly man to the second level.

WOMAN  
You don't have to do this, doc.

DR. CALDWELL  
Keep moving, Mr. Levine.

INT. MALL - MAIN CORRIDOR

The lava is filling the first level like water flooding a skating rink.

ANGLE

Lava flows from a store room carrying a couple dozen mannequins.

ANGLE

A lava rock display from the Nature Store is carried into the main corridor.

INT. PARKING RAMP - MALL

Roark and Skinner have made it into the parking ramp. They make their way upstream--against a couple dozen people, scanning every face for Reena.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - DAY

We see a full shot of the mall, which has become a fiery sarcophagus. We hear pipes explode and glass shatter. We hear the cries and moans of the injured.

INT. MALL - FIRST FLOOR

Reena is on the floor, holding her ribs. Regaining consciousness. Coughing. Each cough causing unimaginable pain. She crawls onto a marble bench. The lava is 50 feet behind her and closing. She drags herself on her elbows.

ROARK AND SKINNER

move into the third level of the mall. Roark searches every face. Face after face after face.

Frustrated, Roark moves to look over the railing. Sees Reena laying on the marble bench. It's about 6' x 12' and elevated off the floor by about 18 inches.

ROARK

Reena!

REENA

Help me!!! Daddy, please, help me!

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - THIRD LEVEL

Skinner exits the Sports Chalet with an armload of climbing rope and metal clips. Roark moves to the railing and looks down into the courtyard.

ROARK

Hang on, honey.

CLOSE ON REENA

Her breathing is labored. The lava flow is a hideous beast who stalks its victim.

THIRD LEVEL - ROARK AND SKINNER

as Skinner fastens a climber's belt around his waist.

ROARK

Whaddayou think you're doing?

SKINNER

Goin' up.

ROARK

No. I go.

Roark grabs the climber's belt from around Skinner's waist. He begins to climb up a steel column.

SKINNER

I'll toss you the rope once you're out there.

ROARK

Okay.

His fingers are white with the stress of pulling himself up--15 feet--until he can clip onto the massive triangular steel joist--one of a dozen that support the roof.

Roark begins to shimmy along the joist, clipping on and off. He looks down to see the lava three floors below him. He has to get out to the center of the joist which will place him directly over Reena. 60 feet above her.

ON REENA

It's all she can do to hold her head up to see her father dangling from the joist.

ROARK

Reena! When I get over to you I'm going to drop a rope. Can you tie it around your waist?

REENA

Yes. I think so.

ANGLE ON

the lava as it moves closer.

BACK TO ROARK

who scoots a few more inches along the joist.

Skinner looks down at Reena and yells--

SKINNER

Hurry, Roark! You gotta move faster.

Roark looks down at the lava, sighs, and tries to pick up the pace.

He's nearly directly over Reena now.

ROARK

(to Skinner)

Get ready!!

Skinner prepares the coil of climbing rope.

Roark moves another two feet and looks down. Reena is directly below him.

But the lava is now within feet of the bench.

REENA

Hurry!!!

Skinner tosses the bundle of rope to Roark. He catches it, clips it to the steel joist and lets the rope drop. It's over the lava--four feet to the side of Reena.

ROARK

Grab the rope, Reena!

She reaches but can't get to the rope.

Reena wiggles and writhes and begins to swing--swing enough to grab... grab the rope. She can't reach it. The heat is unbearable.

Then they hear it--the water coming down the utility corridor.

ROARK  
I'm going down!!!

SKINNER  
NO!!!

Roark descends. "

SKINNER  
You'll never get out in time.

Roark's clip snaps. He falls. 50 feet. Straight for the lava.

Roark's rope snaps tight around his waist and breaks his fall--

ROARK  
Ahhhhh!!!

--and just about breaks him in half--but leaves him dangling 6 feet over the lava.

REENA  
Daddy!!!... Daddy!!!

Roark waves his arms to signal that he's conscious.

Reena looks over at her father. He's hanging there. What she doesn't see is the knot holding his rope to the joist--it's slipping.

The water is now a thundering roar.

SKINNER  
C'mon!!!!

REENA  
Hurry!

Roark swings enough to get Reena clipped onto her rope.

ROARK  
GO!!!

SKINNER

begins to pull her up as the water explodes into the mall.

Skinner pulls her up. Higher and higher he pulls.

The rope slips--reels through Skinner's hands--burning skin--until he regains control.

Skinner pulls... and pulls... pulls...

White steam fills the mall as the water strikes the lava.

INT. THIRD LEVEL

Skinner pulls Reena over the railing--to safety.

THE WATER

surges below them.

ROARK

is whipped around on his rope, soon to boil to death.

REENA

holds on to Skinner and sobs.

SKINNER

We gotta get out of here.

Reena pulls away from Skinner and looks over the rail at the maelstrom below.

The white steam begins to clear and all they see below is angry lava. Partially crusted. Cracking and heaving to display its fiery core.

THIRD LEVEL

Reena's despair is overwhelming.

Skinner takes her hand.

SKINNER

He loved you more than anything.

HOLD.

SKINNER

C'mon...

He leads her away.

Then...

they hear it...

ROARK

Hey!

REENA

Daddy?

ROARK

Up herë!

Reena and Skinner dash back to the railing.

SKINNER

Look!

As the steam clears from the top of the mall they can see him--pulling himself up the rope--dragging himself a couple of inches at a time. No strength left, just will.

cut to:

Skinner pulls Roark over the rail to safety.

REENA

Daddy.

Roark gently places his arms around Reena. Holds her. Holds her tight.

ROARK

Forgive me... forgive me...  
I'm so sorry...

On Reena's face we see the release of the anger and pain she held inside for so long--waiting to hear her father speak these words.

ROARK

Mom is gone. It's us now. You and me.

HOLD.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO

TEN MONTHS FROM NOW:

As we see the following daytime shots of the city:

- A woman on the Venice boardwalk with a T-shirt that reads:  
"I survived the L.A. volcano"
- A helicopter shot of a grey lava tube (it's about 12 feet in diameter and looks like a colon) as it meanders through neighborhoods.



- Close on the lava tube as it crosses a street in a residential area. A tunnel has been cut so that cars can pass.
- Golf course. A golfer prepares to tee off on the ninth hole, mindful of the water hazard, sand traps and the lava hazard.
- The "Volcano Burger" stand is carved out of the side of a lava rock.
- PCH at the California Incline passes through a tunnel of volcanic rock. Pedestrians pass to and fro on a walkway on top.
- A teenager walking through Westwood wearing the T-shirt:

L.A.  
Lavit or leave it

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DAY

Misty and Derek frolic in the surf. They drink in the fresh air and embrace. Very happy to be alive.

cut to:

EXT. SMALL BUNGALOW - DAY

Augie chases a butterfly--running to and fro--around a yard filled with wild flowers. He collides with Janet. She's weeding.

JANET  
Hey, you.

AUGIE  
Meeeoow...

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROARK HOUSE - DAY

It's a glorious spring day. The grass is fresh and green. A lawn sprinkler throws water on the sidewalk.

Vesuvius approaches. Stops in front of the house. Skinner gets out, walking with the aid of a cane. He dodges the sprinkler and ambles to the front door. Rings the bell. Reena answers.

SKINNER

S'up?

She smiles warmly.

REENA

Nada.

SKINNER

Where's that unruly dad of yours?

REENA

He's out in back... saving the world.

EXT. ROARK HOUSE - DAY

A big chunk of lava bomb still sits in the middle of the back yard. The grass is nicely mowed around it and Mike Roark is passed-out in his lawn chair--the sprinkler hose in his hand, spraying down into a big puddle on the lawn.

THEN...

the chair begins to shake. Roark's like a guy shot out of a cannon. He's on his feet--a full adrenalin rush. He turns...it's Skinner.

SKINNER

Hey, dad, take a chill pill.

He looks at Roark standing in his man-made lake.

SKINNER

Some flood control expert you are.

Skinner drags the matching chair up along Roark's and plops down.

SKINNER

So... you goin' back to work yet?

ROARK

Me. Nah... how 'bout you?

SKINNER

Nah.

ROARK

You wanna play horseshoes?

SKINNER

Nah... you?

ROARK

Nah.

(then)

Croquet?

SKINNER

Nah. You?

ROARK

Nah.

Both men--in full contentment--lean back in their chairs.

ROARK

I'll tell you one thing... even though  
I'm not old enough to be your father...  
I'd be damn proud if you were my son.

Skinner feels that. Roark feels it.  
All is well.

AND THE CAMERA PULLS

up and away from Roark's back yard.

Up and away...

We see the neighborhood below us.

Up and away...

As the camera tilts we see the full tableau of L.A. It's  
the same as it was in the beginning of the movie only now  
there's a 633-foot volcano in the middle of the picture.  
Verdant and primal. Smoke gently wafting from the crest of  
the cone.

Life goes on.

THE END

POSTSCRIPT:

There are 550 known active volcanoes on earth.

The U.S Geological Survey lists 44 sites  
in the Western U.S. with the potential  
to erupt explosively.